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SAINT AUGUSTINE





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The Fathers for English Readers.

SAINT AUGUSTINE.

BY THE

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PREFACE TO THE SERIES.

WHILE all those who pretend to the character of educated people would be ashamed to be ignorant of the history of Greece and Rome, the lives and achievements of the great men of these countries, and the works of their chief writers, it is to be feared that they content themselves often with a very slight knowledge of the History of the Christian Church and of the illustrious Ecclesiastics who have exercised so vast an influence upon the institutions and manners, the literature and philosophy, as well as the religion of modern Europe.

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SAINT AUGUSTINE.

CHAPTER I.

NORTH AFRICA.

Description of the African Provinces—Former existence of Lake Triton ; its influence on the Climate.

TRACE on a map the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It runs in a tolerably straight line from south-of-west to north-of-east, until about midway it bends round southward, and forms a great promontory, projecting into the middle of the sea, opposite the island of Sicily. This promontory was the Carthaginian territory; and the great Punic city, the rival of Rome, was situated at its most prominent angle. At the south-east point of this territory is situated the gulf of the Lesser Syrtis ; and from this point the coast-line sweeps round, southward and eastward, in a great quarter circle, at whose other extremity is the Greater Syrtis.

This is the southernmost point of the North African coast, and marks the division between the Latin part of Africa and the Greek part.

From this southernmost point the coast-line starts again, and with a bold, regular, sinuous curve, projects a great rounded promontory northward into

the sea: this promontory is the district of Cyrenaica. Then the coast-line resumes its original west to east course, along the coast of Egypt, past the mouths of the Nile, till it joins the Syrian coast of the Asiatic continent in the south-east corner of the great seat. Going back to the Carthaginian promontory, the territory of Carthage became the Roman province of Africa; starting from it westward, adjoining Africa lies Numidia, a district of about equal size; and the whole remainder of the coast-line right away to the Pillars of Hercules is that of Mauritania.

Let us inquire into the general character of the country whose coast-line we have thus traced. From the Strait of Gibraltar to the Nile delta the country consists of a strip of habitable land, hemmed in between the sea on the north and the Great Desert on the south, varying greatly in width in its western and eastern halves. The western half of this seaboard has the great chain of the Atlas mountains interposed as a barrier against the torrid sands of the Sahara. In the west the peaks of Atlas attain a height of 12,000 feet, and are covered with perpetual snow; in the eastern portion of the range the peaks are only half that height, and are covered with snow for part of the year only. The northern slope of this range, descending in a series of broad, natural terraces to the sea, watered by many streams, and lying on the margin of the temperate zone, is one of the finest regions on the surface of the earth.

At the bottom of the Great Syrtis the sand and water meet, and form the natural boundary between the two great ancient political divisions of the

African coast already mentioned, viz., to the west of it, the Latin-speaking provinces of Mauritania, Numidia, and Africa ; to the east of it, the Greek-speaking provinces of Cyrenaica and Egypt : the one in Roman times belonging to the Western, the other to the Eastern Empire. It is with the Latin-speaking provinces that we are at present specially concerned.

In trying to realize the ancient physical geography of the country, we must take into account some remarkable geological changes which have happened to it.

If the reader will again look at the map and put his finger on the Lesser Syrtis, then carry his eye westward, he will find a lake marked on the map, called Lake Triton ; and still further west he will find a series of lakes, indicated in a vague manner, as if their limits were not well-known. This part of the country has been lately surveyed by French engineers employed by the Government, and a model of the country was exhibited at the late Paris Exhibition. The French engineers find that these salt lakes are very numerous, and are all more or less connected with one another, and extend in an unbroken line from within a few miles of the Lesser Syrtis to a distance of three hundred miles westward. The desert parts between the lagoons abound in quicksands covered over with a saline crust. Some of these lakes are below the level of the Mediterranean ; and the object of the French surveyors is to show that the whole district might by easy engineering works be connected with the Mediterranean, and converted into

an inland sea, extending three hundred miles in length, from east to west, and forty miles in breadth, from north to south :—an area somewhat greater than that of the Irish Sea.¹

It would seem that this district has at one time been covered with a sea, of which these saline lagoons and dangerous quicksands are the traces, and that some gradual rise in the level of the land, especially towards the eastern extremity of this inland sea, has cut off its connection with the Mediterranean, and left the shallower portions of the sea dry and desert, and limited the water to the deeper portions, which are now lagoons.

These facts suggest a re-examination of the descriptions of the country by the old geographers: Herodotus, B.C. 405; Scylax, B.C. 200; Pomponius Mela, A.D. 43; Ptolemy, A.D. 139; and from a careful consideration of their descriptions, Mr. Irving draws the following inferences: that in the time of Herodotus, the bay of the Lesser Syrtis opened by a strait into a great bay known by the name of the Bay of Triton. In the time of Scylax, two hundred years later, the Lesser Syrtis and the Bay of Triton were still united by a channel which had become narrower. In the time of Pomponius Mela, the communication between the Bay of Triton and the Mediterranean had disappeared. In the time of Ptolemy, the one bay had taken the form of several lakes. The proposal of the

¹ We are indebted for all this information to an ingenious paper by Mr. B. A. Irving, M.A., of Ambleside, in the *Transactions of the Cumberland Association for the Advancement of Literature and Science*, part iv.

French engineers, then, is simply to let in the waters of the Mediterranean, and restore this inland body of waters to something like what it was about the time of the Christian era and for one or two hundred years afterwards.

What is the object of this undertaking? It is first and chiefly to ameliorate the climate of Algeria. "Nowhere," says Mr. Irving, "are the contrasts of nature more striking than in the southern part of the French province of Constantine. There meet at the Auress¹ mountains two worlds which are total opposites. On the one side, to the north, are snowy peaks, broad mountain pastures, picturesque villages vying with each other in the richness and fertility of their gardens. On the other side, to the south, is a plain parched by a burning sun, an horizon without limit, hot, rugged mountain sides, with broken precipices and deep ravines, without vegetation, strangely harmonizing with the aridity beyond."

What would be the effect of the restoration of this inland sea? The formation of the Suez Canal and the filling of the ancient lakes by its means have already had a marked effect on the climate of the isthmus. Formerly it hardly rained in twenty years, now there is a considerable annual rainfall. Exactly the same process would take place at the restored Bay of Triton. The hot winds from the Sahara, blowing over a sea fifty times greater than the canal and all its lakes, would produce an enormous evaporation; the winds laden with this moisture would blow against the mountain-

¹ The name by which this part of the mountain-range above described is now known.

range placed like a great condenser right across their path ; the resulting rainfall would irrigate the southern slope of the mountain-range, which in many places has an inclination so gentle as "to form an immense plain consisting of an alluvium of remarkable fertility, which only requires water to produce many crops in a year." The climate on the north of the mountain-range would also be affected, and would become more moist and more temperate. All this new district south of the mountains, between them and the Bay of Triton, would obtain easy communication by water with the Mediterranean and the civilized world.

But if this would be the state of the country consequent upon an artificial restoration of the great Bay of Triton, it follows that this was the state of the country at the time the bay existed ; and in trying to restore to our mental apprehension the Roman province of Africa we must by no means omit this great inland sea from the picture. And this, perhaps, enables us more easily to credit the accounts which we have of the fertility, the wealth, and the populousness of the province of Africa in the days of the Roman Empire.

The provinces of Numidia and Mauritania, rising by three broad steps from the sea level to the Atlas range, with a soil of extraordinary fertility, formed one vast corn country. In climate they belong rather to Europe than to Africa, having the same productions as those of Andalusia.¹

¹ If the Sahara were ever, as seems probable, the bed of a great inland sea, it was long before historical times, and need not enter into our consideration here.

CHAPTER II.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF NORTH AFRICA.

The Carthaginian State—Its rivalry with Rome—Its Conquest—
Roman Colonization of North Africa.

THE Phœnician power has a special interest for us English people, because it is the first Power of which history tells us that its greatness was based, like our own, on commerce, leading to colonization and to conquest.

Carthage, founded probably in the ninth century before Christ, on that promontory which we have described as projecting into the very middle of the Mediterranean, opposite the island of Sicily, was the latest of the Phœnician colonies, but it grew into the most powerful ; and when Tyre, the mother city, had decayed, it became the representative of the ancient Punic name. It entered into a confederation with the other Punic colonies which dotted the Mediterranean coasts ; it conquered Sardinia and Corsica, part of Sicily and the southern coasts of Spain ; and Carthage at length became the rival of Rome for the mastery of the Mediterranean world.

The rival powers came into collision in the three Punic wars extending over 118 years (from B.C. 264 to 146), on whose result it depended whether the

civilization of Europe should be moulded on the Punic or on the Roman type. The victories of Scipio ended in the total destruction of Carthage in the year 146 B.C. (the very year in which the fall of Corinth completed the Roman conquest of Greece), and solemn curses were invoked on the head of him who should rebuild the rival city.

Notwithstanding, Caius Gracchus, twenty-four years after its destruction, planned its rebuilding; the plan was revived by Julius Cæsar; and at length Augustus built New Carthage, on the site of the ancient city, 101 years after its destruction, and made it the seat of the Proconsul of Africa.

The province of Numidia, on the death of King Juba, the *protégé* of Rome, was made a Roman province by Julius Cæsar. The historian Sallust was sent as his Legatus, who fixed his seat of government at Cirta (the modern Constantine). In A.D. 42 Claudius annexed the whole of the province of Mauritania to the Empire. Constantine, in his revision of the administrative arrangements of the Empire, placed the government of Mauritania in the province of Gaul, and that of Numidia under the Proconsul of Africa.

The Romans, according to their usual policy, planted numerous colonies in these fertile regions on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, constructed roads, encouraged agriculture and commerce, and probably made the country more prosperous than in any previous period of its history. Great tracts of the fertile corn lands were allotted to the great families of Rome, who cultivated them by the help of

slave labour. Numerous towns sprang up, and were adorned with temples, basilicas, baths, theatres. The language and manners of Rome were generally adopted, and these vast fertile regions became one of the most valuable portions of the Empire, and the great granary on which the Imperial city depended for the food of its people.

Dr. Davis¹ has in recent years explored parts of this region, and he has found everywhere the traces of Roman habitations. He speaks of passing as many as twenty ruined villages, mostly Roman, but nameless, in the course of a single day. At Mokthar are the remains of a large city six miles in circumference, with suburbs of larger extent, with triumphal arches, mausoleums, walls, and gates. At Hydra, and Thala, and Sbaitla, are similar evidences of bygone population and prosperity; at Eljem, a Roman amphitheatre almost equal in size to that at Verona, but grander in appearance, and only surpassed, if surpassed at all, by the Colosseum at Rome.² In short, the whole book is a series of evidences that this province of Africa proper was in Roman times teeming with population, abounding in wealth, covered with fine cities, and in the highest state of civilization.

The population of these provinces, like that of many parts of the Roman Empire, was a strange

¹ "Ruined Cities in Africa," by Dr. N. Davis, London, 1862.

² Engravings of its exterior and interior will be found in the *Illustrated London News* of January 9th, 1874. Eljem represents the ancient city of Thysarus.

mixture of races. There were first two aboriginal races, one of dark, the other of fair complexion, descendants of the fierce Numidian and Mauritanian nations of whom we read in the history of the Punic wars. Then there were the descendants of the Carthaginian and other Punic colonists, whose civilization—of which we know little—had a Tyrian origin and character. After the destruction of Jerusalem Jews seem to have settled in Carthage and others of the cities of this district, as in Egypt and Cyrenaica, in numbers sufficiently large to form an important element in the population. Lastly, there was the Roman element.

In the Roman provinces of the East, where there was a similarly heterogeneous population, the Roman element was often little more than a clique of officials, numerically small and exercising little influence on the language or manners of the people. But in some way which history has failed to record, perhaps by a considerable Latin immigration at an early period after the Roman Conquest, the province of Africa proper (coinciding roughly with the Carthaginian territory already described) was more thoroughly Latinized than usual, and this made the province one of the most Roman out of Italy.

Numidia and Mauritania were studded with Roman towns, but retained a larger proportion of their native inhabitants than Africa proper. And the native tribes at the back of the Roman districts maintained their independence, and even made predatory incursions, with difficulty restrained by the Roman arms; and finally, joining with the Vandal invaders, they helped

to overthrow the Roman rule and destroy the Roman civilization in one of the fairest portions of the Empire.

The African provinces in the political revolutions of the Empire usually followed without resistance the varying fortunes of the Italian portion of it. Occasional local rebellions, followed by proscriptions and fines, interrupted the general tranquillity, but long intervals of peace gave space for a steady increase in the prosperity of Africa up to the time at which our history commences.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHURCHES OF NORTH AFRICA.

Planting of the Church in Africa—The cradle of the Latin Church—Tertullian—The Decian Persecution—The Lapsi—Novatian Schism—The Plague of Carthage—Cyprian—The Diocletian Persecution—Donatism.

OF the planting of Christianity in North Africa absolutely nothing is told by ancient history, and the very few relics of Christian antiquity which have at present been discovered in its ruined cities throw no light whatever upon it. This early Church of North Africa has a special interest, inasmuch as it was the earliest Latin-speaking Church and the cradle of Latin Christianity. "During the first two centuries the Church of Rome was essentially Greek. The Roman bishops bear Greek names," with one exception, Victor, who is said to have come from Africa. The earliest Roman Liturgy was Greek; the few remains of the early Christian literature of Rome are Greek. The same remark holds good of Gaul. But the Church of North Africa seems to have been Latin-speaking from the first. The first Latin version of the Scriptures was certainly made in Africa: when it was made is uncertain, but was current in the time of Tertullian. Tertullian is the first great Christian writer in Latin, and his writings are the

earliest specimen of the ecclesiastical Latin which became the common language of the learned of the Western world down to modern times. The first "Apology" of Tertullian, written probably about the year 198 A.D., gives us our first and only knowledge of the existence and condition of the Christian Churches of North Africa at that time. He speaks of Christianity as at that early period already widely spread. "We are a people of yesterday," he says, "and yet we have filled every place belonging to your cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum. We leave you your temples only. We can count your armies ; our numbers in a single province will be greater." In a second "Apology," a few years later, addressed to Scapula, the prefect, he says, "Thousands of both sexes, of every rank, will eagerly crowd to martyrdom, exhaust your fires, and weary your swords. Carthage must be decimated ; the principal persons in the city, even perhaps your own most intimate friends and kindred, must be sacrificed."

This first African Christian with whom we are acquainted is a type of African Christianity, in the fervour of his temperament, running at length, as it did, into the extremes of a fanatical Puritanism, and carrying him at last beyond the pale of the orthodox Church into the sect of the Montanists.

Under the deliberate and general persecution of Decius, the African Christians suffered greatly. Many, indeed, lapsed from the faith in fear of torture and death, among them some of the bishops and clergy ; many obtained from the officers, by bribes, certificates

that they had complied with the required heathen sacrifices, when they had not. The former were called *Lapsi*, the latter *Libellatici*. But the fervour of the African temperament showed itself in many cases of disregard of all concealment or evasion, and even in a reckless courting of martyrdom. After the persecution was over, the Zealots showed their spirit of fanatical Puritanism in a more objectionable way, by the harshness with which they endeavoured to exclude their weaker brethren from readmission to the communion of the Church. Novatian, one of the presbyters of Carthage, procured irregular consecration as a bishop, and headed a schism composed of the extremest of these zealots; and the Novatians, though not a very powerful body, long continued to exist.

We must not omit to mention as a pleasing illustration of the better side of this fervent zeal and contempt for death, the conduct of the Church in the plague of Carthage. At the commencement of the reign of Valerian a plague, which the armies brought back from the Persian war, ravaged the whole western world, and was specially destructive at Carthage. It spread gradually from house to house. The panic usual in presence of such a visitation seized upon the inhabitants, and the usual paralysis of all natural affection was exhibited. The sick were left untended, or thrust out of doors, the dead were left unburied in the houses and streets. The illustrious Cyprian was Bishop of Carthage at the time. He called his flock together and exhorted them to show the sincerity of their faith, and to illustrate the virtues of their

religion by their courage and their charity. He bade them not to confine their cares to their own relations or to the Christian brotherhood, but to include the heathen in their ministrations. The city was divided into districts, different offices were assigned to different visitors. The rich gave their money, and the poor their labour. The sick were tended, the dead were buried. The confessors of the Decian Persecution just released from the prisons and the mines, with the scars of their tortures still upon them, might probably have been seen risking their lives anew in these acts of love to their enemies.

In the latter part of the reign of Valerian, an Imperial edict subjected all the bishops who refused to abandon the faith to the penalty of death, and Cyprian was one of those who suffered.

In the last and most severe of all the persecutions, which goes by the name of the Diocletian Persecution, Maximinus Daza was the emperor who ruled over Syria and Africa, and in his dominions the persecution was more general, more cruel, and more lasting than in any other part of the empire. Again the old experiences of the Decian Persecution were repeated. Many lapsed, many gave up the sacred books to be burned and earned the title of *traditors*. On the other hand, many were tortured, imprisoned, maimed, and killed. Again the African spirit showed itself in an exaggerated estimate of the merit of martyrdom. Confessors, while in prison expecting death, assumed an extravagant tone of saintly privilege, and thought that in the blood of martyrdom they cleansed away at once the sins of a lifetime. Again, after the per-

secution was over the old differences arose as to the treatment of the lapsed, and the disagreement again broke out into open schism. When Cæcilian, a representative of the moderate party, was elected to succeed Mensurius in the see of Carthage, the Puritan party asserted that his consecration was invalid because it had been performed by Felix, bishop of Aptunga, who they alleged was a traditor, and they proceeded to elect a rival bishop in Majorinus. Just at this crisis Constantine, lately converted, sent money to Cæcilianus, as bishop of Carthage, to be distributed among the African churches ; the Donatists at once appealed to the emperor, claiming that they ought to be recognised as the Church in Africa. At their request the question was submitted to the judgment of a number of Gallic and Italian bishops meeting at Rome, who decided that Cæcilian's consecration was valid, and the Donatists were in the wrong, but offered them the most favourable terms of reconciliation. The Donatists refused to accept the decision, and the question was again examined at a Synod of the whole Church of the Western Empire, meeting at Arles (A.D. 314), which again decided against the Donatists. They again refused to accept the decision, and appealed to the emperor himself as the ultimate source of justice. The emperor himself heard the case, and again, finally, decided against the Donatists, and required them to be reconciled to the Church under penalties. His measures of coercion failed to reduce them to obedience, and Constantine finally left them as wrong-headed and obstinate men to the action of time, hoping that

the schism would die out if not kept alive by persecution.

But the contrary happened. The stern Puritan tenets of the Donatists were in harmony with the fervid fanatical African temper. The sect spread until the whole Church of Africa was torn in pieces. In nearly every town there were rival bishops and rival churches, and not only towns, but families were distracted by fierce religious hate. In the wilder districts of the country a number of Zealots, largely recruited, it is probable, from the excitable native population, carried all the peculiar characteristics of the Donatists to the wildest extremes. They were a kind of travesty of the fanatical Coptic monks of the deserts in the neighbourhood of Alexandria. They lived a life of stern asceticism ; they despised death, and courted martyrdom ; they broke in upon the pagan ceremonies, and insulted the Catholic worship ; they gathered into large companies and roamed about the country, a terror to all peaceful people, and often guilty of outrages against the Catholics. They were known by the name of Circumcellions.

When we gather together what we can learn of the condition of society and of the Church in the African provinces in the middle of the fourth century, it is a picture of great material prosperity, but a strange patchwork of different races and of rival religions.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUTH OF AUGUSTINE.

His Birth—Education at Thagaste, at Madaura—His Father's Death.

THE Confessions of Augustine were written by him with the special object of tracing out and recording his spiritual history. "Come, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul," might be its motto; but we gather out of it the salient points of an ordinary biography.

Augustine was born on the 13th of Nov., A.D. 354, at the small town of Thagaste (now Tajilt), in the province of Numidia. His father, Patricius, was a poor burgess of the town, a pagan, a man of harsh disposition and licentious life. The character of his mother, Monica, drawn with loving care by the skilful pen of her son, stands side by side with his own in the "Confessions," and she has thus become one of the best known and most interesting female characters in Church history.

He was not an only son. He had a brother, Navigius, and a sister whose name is not known. He tells us that at his birth he was signed with the cross and sprinkled with salt, but not baptized. His mother taught him something of the chief truths of

the Christian religion from infancy; and when in his early years he was seized with a dangerous sickness he begged of his mother, with eagerness and faith, that he might receive baptism ("Conf.," i. 17 and v. 16), but on his rapid recovery the sacrament was again put off. This was in accordance with a feeling common at this period, of which we meet with many examples, and which Augustine describes at some length: "As if I must needs be again polluted should I live, my cleansing was deferred, because the defilements of sin would, after that washing, bring greater and more perilous guilt." For, he says, it was the custom to reason thus: "Let him alone, let him do as he will, for he is not yet baptized." "But," he reasons, "as to bodily health, no one says, 'Let him be worse wounded for he is not yet healed.' How much better then had I been at once healed, and then, by my friends' diligence and my own, my soul's recovered health had been kept safe in Thy keeping who gavest it. Better truly. But how many and great waves of temptation seemed to hang over me from my boyhood. These my mother foresaw; and preferred to expose to them the clay whence I might afterwards be moulded, than the very cast when made" ("Conf.," i. 17, 18).

We gather that from an early age he gave tokens of unusual abilities; that his father and mother were proud of him, and resolved to give him every advantage of education. He gives us a naïve picture of his school-days. First, he learned reading, writing, and arithmetic in the school of his native town. Then he was sent to the better school of the

neighbouring large town of Madaura, a town, as we afterwards learn, the majority of whose inhabitants were still pagans, and where the statues of the ancient gods still stood uninjured in the forum. Here he read the higher subjects of grammar and rhetoric. Like most clever boys he delighted in the lessons which appealed to his imagination, and hated drudgery. "One and one are two, two and two are four," was a hateful sing-song. "The wooden horse lined with armed men," and the burning of Troy, and "Creusa's shade and sad similitude," he read in the great epic of his native tongue with delight; but he hated Greek; and though Homer contained the like "sweetly-vain fictions" as Virgil, yet to him, as to the majority of schoolboys before and since, "the difficulty of a foreign tongue dashed, as it were, with gall all the sweetness of Grecian fable, for not one word of it did I understand. And to make me understand I was urged vehemently with cruel threats and punishments." His elders, and even his parents, used to laugh at his stripes, his then "great and grievous ill;" and in his childish religion he used to pray to God that he might not be beaten.

At the age of sixteen he returned home to live with his parents for a time, while his father was providing for the expense of sending him to the schools of Carthage, the principal university, as we should call it, of the African provinces. At this crisis his father died, having been previously won—in large measure by the pious example of Monica, and by her patient endurance of his infidelities and bursts of temper—to

embrace the Christian faith and amend his faults of character. A wealthy fellow-townsmen, Romanianus, now came forward and helped the widow to carry out her wishes on behalf of her promising son, and send him to complete his education at Carthage.

In the 12th chapter of the 2nd book of his work "Against the Academicians," Augustine makes grateful acknowledgment of his obligations to Romanianus. "Poor child that I was, when it was necessary to me to continue my studies you received me into your house, and, what was more valuable still, into your heart. Deprived of my father, your friendship consoled me ; your conversation re-animated me ; your wealth came to my assistance. Even in our own town [Thagaste] your affection and your benefits had made me a person almost as considerable as yourself."

CHAPTER V.

UNIVERSITY LIFE AT CARTHAGE.

Description of New Carthage—Its Schools—Manners of the Students — Augustine's University Career — Becomes a Manichæan.

NOTWITHSTANDING the curse which Scipio invoked against him who should rebuild the great city whose rivalry had so long held Rome in fear, Augustus, exactly a hundred years after its destruction, rebuilt it on the same site.

The natural advantages of the site, which had led to the original choice, dictated its re-occupation. It was a peninsula formed by the great lagoon of Tunis on the east, and by an open bay (now by the recession of the sea converted into a lagoon) on the west. This peninsula possessed the further advantage of a ridge of rock rising abruptly out of the level ground, like the hill of the Acropolis at Athens, affording vantage-ground for a citadel.

The New Carthage of Augustus was to a great extent a restoration of the Punic city. Not only the great natural features, the outer and inner harbour, and the citadel hill—the Byrsa—inevitably controlled the general arrangement of the restored city, but advantage was taken of what remained of the work of the great Punic builders. The great covered

reservoirs on the south and west sides of the city (which still remain) were repaired and used ; and the great aqueduct, sixty miles in length, which conveyed water to them from the mountain now called Jebel Zagwan. The chief temples of the ancient city still remained, though in ruins, and these were restored with greater magnificence than ever, though perhaps with new dedications. The temples of the goddess *Cœlestis*, of Saturn, of Apollo, occupied various sites on the level ground of the city. The Byrsa rose terrace above terrace in the midst ; on a platform on the very highest part of the ridge, approached by a stair of sixty steps, was the temple of *Æsculapius*, and the rest of the rock was occupied by the palace of the Proconsul. The Forum was at the foot of the Byrsa, between it and the harbours ; here also were the Senate-house and the temple of Apollo, which once contained an image of gold in a chapel overlaid with gold to the weight of 1,000 talents. Three streets ascended from the Forum to the Byrsa, the middle one, called the *Via Salutaris*, probably leading straight to the grand stair which gave access to the temple on the summit. On the west and south sides of the Byrsa are still the remains of baths, probably the *Thermæ Gargilianæ*, famous in the ecclesiastical history of the city. The remaining streets on the level ground of the peninsula were for the most part straight and at right angles. North of the city was the walled suburb of *Megara* or *Megalia*, with beautiful gardens watered by canals, still represented by the gardens of the modern city of Tunis. The explorations made on the site in our own day by

Dr. Davis¹ have helped us to reconstruct the Roman Carthage. The tessellated pavements discovered by him, now in the British Museum, are perhaps the finest and most artistic works of the kind which have come down to us, and give us a standard by which we may estimate the grand scale and sumptuous splendour of the great houses of the Imperial officials and wealthy citizens of Nova Carthago.

The city was the seat of the government of the Proconsul of Africa, it was the great emporium of the commerce which, in exchange for the vast exports of corn which helped to feed Rome, imported all the luxuries which the civilized world could give in return, and distributed them through the numerous wealthy cities and great villas of the flourishing province.

The city was also the seat of the great "university" of the African provinces. The Imperial Government made ample provision for the education of the people throughout the empire. Every little town, like Thagaste, had its elementary schools; in the greater towns schools of a higher grade; and each provincial capital had its staff of professors—grammarians, philosophers, rhetoricians—appointed by the Government, paid partly by a Government salary, partly by the fees of the students; the discipline of the students was under the supervision of the governor of the city, and from among the students the most promising were taken into the service of the State.

Rhetoric was the highest department of study. Even in our day and country eloquence is the high

¹ "Carthage and her Remains," by Dr. N. Davis.

road to some of the highest honours of the State, at the Bar, and in the Senate. In those days it was still more important. More of the work of the world was done by oral communication and less by books, and eloquence then was systematically cultivated. The rhetorician was the professor of the highest grade in the university. His art was not merely that of eloquent expression. It implied first a sound training in the lower branches of education, an acquaintance with the literature of Greece and Rome, a knowledge of the imperfect natural science of the time, a thorough acquaintance with the great philosophical systems, a trained skill in all the arts of reasoning. This encyclopædic knowledge and this dialectic skill were mere raw materials, to be used with a good memory, a ready wit, a facile skill in all the graces of language, and a profound knowledge of human nature, with the final object of instructing, convincing, persuading, perplexing; whether instructing a class of students, convincing a magistrate on the tribunal, persuading an assembly of citizens, overcoming a rival professor, or delighting a meeting of *literati*.

It is remarkable how many of the great churchmen of these ages were originally eminent professors of rhetoric; e.g. all the great men of the African Church, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, and many others in other branches of the Church; and it is impossible to read their writings without recognising the clearness of thought, the systematic arrangement, the vigour of expression, the felicity of diction, which their training had given them.

The widowed Monica sent her son of seventeen,

with his brilliant talents, his unformed principles, and ardent temperament, to this great school of learning, to this luxurious capital, with much wise and plain-spoken counsel on the temptations which awaited him, counsel which he considered "womanish" as he listened to it, and which he never intended to observe.

Augustine is frank in his admission of the character of his university career. The system, we have seen, was professorial, the students attended such lectures as they pleased, and paid their fees to the professors. They were practically under no discipline, and were as unruly and independent as German students under the same system to-day. They acquired the proverbial Carthaginian passion for the theatre and the circus ("Conf.," III. 2; VI. 11); they roamed about the forum and the principal streets; they plunged into the dissolute living of a great capital; they were noisy and insubordinate in the schools of the professors, where a group of them would come in riotously in the middle, or leave before the end, of the lecture or disputation. The "fastest set" had given themselves the name of *Eversores*, and played such brutal pranks on unoffending passers-by or modest women as, the *Spectator*¹ tells us, the Mohocks did in the streets of London in the reign of Queen Anne. Augustine's friendship with some of them made him one of the set; and the false shame which is one of the great temptations of young men, made him take part in their follies

¹ Nos. 324 and 347.

and vices, though he protests that he always disliked their brutal practical jokes. But in the midst of all this dissipation his studies were not altogether neglected ; his natural genius asserted itself, and he found himself chief in the rhetoric school. His chief antagonist, he tells us, was Simplicius, who had the advantage of a prodigious memory. The professor of rhetoric under whom they studied was named Democritus.

In the course of his studies he fell upon the "Hor-tensius" of Cicero, which had a great effect upon his mind, giving him a distaste for the dissipated life he had been leading, and inspiring him with a "burning desire" for wisdom. In short, it was a kind of first conversion, not to religion but to philosophy. His thoughts, indeed, were drawn back to the recollection of his early teaching ; and the "apostolic Scriptures being at that time unknown to him" (III. 8), he turned to them in order to see what they contained, and how they would help him to true wisdom ; but he tells us "they seemed to him unworthy to be compared to the stateliness of Tully." He would probably read the Scriptures in the African version, the earliest Latin translation, which had been the Bible of the African Churches from the second century. This version, we know, was very rude, and even barbarous in style, and would naturally be repugnant to the taste of a young student whose whole training had taught him to expect truth to be presented to the mind in a learned, artificial, ornate, and polished discourse. It is curious that Jerome also records of himself that when after his conversion he tried to

read the Scriptures, the inartistic style of the Prophets repelled him ; he would read them in the old Italic version, which was less rude than the African ; and that his involuntary preference for Cicero was a heavy burden on his conscience.¹ In this state of mind, believing vaguely in Christianity, thirsting with the ardour of youthful genius for wisdom, but failing to see what he sought in the apostolic writings, presented through the unfavourable medium of a barbarous Latin version, he fell among some of the professors of the Manichæan system, who were numerous among the strange mixture of sects and parties which we have already described as existing in Africa. This strange system seemed to offer exactly what Augustine sought.

It held itself out as a higher form of Christianity. Taking its cue from the ancient philosophies, which had an exoteric and an esoteric doctrine, it declared that the common Christianity of the Gospels and Epistles was, no doubt, what Jesus taught His disciples ; but that He himself said, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now ; howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." Manes professed that he was this promised Paraclete, and that what he taught was that "all truth" of which Christ spake ; so that Manichæism was offered to Christian inquirers as the Higher Christianity. The young student was just in the frame of mind to be attracted by these pretensions, and he openly joined their sect.

¹ See the "Fathers for English Readers : Jerome," p. 45.

It was also during his university career that this youth of eighteen entered into an illegitimate connection with a young woman, by whom he had a son, Adeodatus, whom he acknowledged, and to whom he was much attached. Though their relations were never sanctioned by marriage, yet we shall find that they continued with mutual fidelity for fourteen years; and that, when broken off by Augustine's departure from Africa (in 385), both bound themselves by vows to a life of continency.

In three years his course of study was ended, and he returned with honour to his native Thagaste.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG RHETORIC-MASTER AT THAGASTE.

Sets up as Tutor at Thagaste—His Mother's Dream—The Bishop's Counsel—His Friendship—On the Death of his Friend returns to Carthage.

AUGUSTINE's stay at Thagaste was a brief one, but its history throws light upon his character.

He had come back from Carthage an avowed Manichæan, and not content with holding these opinions himself he was using all his trained skill as a disputant to confound the orthodox and win converts to his views.

His pious mother, when she came to know of her son's perversion, "wept for him more than mothers weep the bodily deaths of their children" (III. 19). She did more than grieve. "Shrinking from and detesting the blasphemies of his error, she began to doubt whether it was right in her to allow her son to live in her house and to eat at the same table with her" (III. 19). It is characteristic of the religious temperament both of mother and son that she was influenced in her conduct and comforted in her heart by a dream or vision, which both accepted as providential.

"She saw herself standing on a certain wooden rule; and a shining youth coming towards her, cheer-

ful and smiling upon her, while she was weeping and overwhelmed with grief. He, having inquired of her the causes of her grief and daily tears, and she answering that she was bewailing her son's perdition, he bade her be comforted, and told her to look and observe that 'Where she was there was her son also.' And when she looked she saw her son standing by her on the same rule." When Monica told her son the vision, and he would have interpreted it against herself, as if it meant that she would one day come over to his views, she without hesitation replied, "No, for it was not told me 'where he, there thou also,' but 'where thou, there he also.'" And Augustine admits that the fact "that she was not perplexed by the plausibility of his false interpretation, and so quickly saw what was the true state of the case, which he had failed to perceive, moved him more than the dream itself."

Of the same period he relates another well-known anecdote, which has comforted thousands of mothers mourning over their erring children.

She begged a certain bishop, who had a reputation for successful dealing with souls, to converse with him, and seek to refute his errors and to reason him back into the truth; but he refused, on the ground that he was puffed up with the novelty of his heresy, and with having perplexed in argument some who had unskilfully encountered him, and that he was in his present frame of mind unteachable. But he advised to "let him alone awhile, and pray God for him, and he will in time find out for himself the error and impiety of his present opinions. He told her

that he himself had been brought up among the Manichæans, and had thus on reading and reflection abandoned them. And when she was not satisfied with this, but urged him with tears and entreaties to undertake the controversy, he, a little displeased at her importunity, said, 'Go thy ways, and God help thee, for it is not possible that the son of these tears should perish.' Which answer she took (as she often mentioned in her conversation with me) as if it had sounded from heaven" ("Conf.," III. 21).

The incident which led to Augustine's removal from Thagaste shows us the tenderness of his emotional nature. "In those years when I first began to teach rhetoric in my native town I had made one my friend, from a community of pursuits, but too dear to me, of mine own age, and, as myself, in the first opening flower of youth. He had grown up from a child with me, and we had been both school-fellows and play-fellows." This friendship was renewed when Augustine returned from Carthage, and was "ripened by the warmth of kindred studies." Augustine had won his friend over to embrace his own Manichæan errors; but the youth was seized with sickness. "Long he lay senseless; and his recovery being despaired of he was baptized unconscious. I, meanwhile, little regarding it, and presuming that his soul would retain rather what it had received of me, than what was wrought on his unconscious body. But it proved far otherwise, for he was refreshed and restored. As soon as I could speak to him, and I could as soon as he was able to listen (for I never left him, and we hung but too much upon each other), I essayed to

jest with him, expecting him to join me in jesting at that baptism which he had received when utterly absent in mind and feeling, but now understood that he had received. But he shrank from me as from an enemy; and with a wonderful and sudden freedom bade me, as I would continue his friend, forbear such language to him. I, all astonished and amazed, suppressed all my emotions till he should get well and his health be strong enough for me to deal with him as I would. But he did not grow well. A few days after, in my absence, he was attacked again by the fever, and so departed.

“At this grief my heart was utterly darkened, and whatever I beheld was death. My native place was a torment to me, and my father’s house a strange unhappiness; and whatever I had shared with him, wanting him became a distracting torture. My eyes sought him everywhere, but he was not given to them; and I hated all places because they contained him not; nor would they now tell me ‘he is coming’ as when he was absent but alone. . . . Only tears were sweet to me, for they succeeded my friend in the dearest of my affections.”

And so, after three more chapters of rather rhetorical, though doubtless very sincere lamentation, he comes to the conclusion—“Whither should my heart flee from my heart? Whither should I flee from myself? Whither not follow myself? And yet I fled out of my country: for so should mine eyes less look for him where they were not wont to see him. And thus from Thagaste I came to Carthage.” And he found, as so many have found under similar griefs,

time and change the great consolers. "Times lose no time; nor do they roll idly by; through our senses they work strange operations on the mind. Behold they went and came, day by day, and by coming and going introduced into my mind other imaginations and other remembrances; and little by little patched me up again with my old kind of delights into which my sorrow gave way" (IV. 1-13).

This abandonment of his native place and of his prospects there, was at first opposed by his friends; and in the continuation of the extract already begun from the book against the Academicians, Augustine gratefully calls to mind Romanianus's kindness to him in the matter:—

"When, without having confided my intention either to you or to any other of my friends, I wished to return to Carthage in order to find a higher position, the love of our common birthplace made you hesitate to approve my design; nevertheless, when you saw that it was no longer possible to overcome the violent desire of a young man aiming at that which appeared to him a better way, your wonderful goodness changed from hindrance to support. You supplied all which was necessary for my journey; you who had protected the cradle, and, as it were, nest of my studies, you sustained the boldness of my first flight."

CHAPTER VII.

THE RHETORIC-MASTER AT CARTHAGE AND ROME.

Sets up as Tutor at Carthage—His Superstition—His Progress in Learning—His doubts of Manichæism—His Intercourse with Faustus—Disgusted with the manners of the Students—Secretly embarks for Rome, leaving his Mother on the Sea-shore—Sets up as Tutor at Rome—Has a Fever—Disappointed with the manners of the Students—Obtains the appointment of Professor of Rhetoric at Milan.

AT Carthage the young and talented rhetorician would find a wider field for his abilities. His "university" reputation would be likely to attract pupils; his youth would be no hindrance; it was doubtless as usual then as it is now for the man who has taken a high degree to remain at his university as a successful private tutor. His pupils were mostly studying with a view to practice in the law courts. "In those years," he says, "I taught rhetoric, and, for love of gain, made sale of the art of victorious loquacity. Yet I preferred (Lord, thou knowest) honest scholars (as they are accounted), and these I, without artifice, taught artifices, not to be practised against the life of the guiltless, though sometimes for the life of the guilty" (iv. 2). Among his pupils were Licentius, the son of his friend and benefactor Romanianus, and Alypius, both of whom became

attached to the career of their illustrious master, and will reappear in the sequel of his history.

It is curious to see how the superstitions of the old heathenism still lingered among people who were no longer heathens, and influenced even such an intellect as that of Augustine. He tells us of this period of his life, "I remember that when I had settled to enter the lists for a theatrical prize, some wizard asked me what I would give him to win ; but I, detesting and abhorring" not disbelieving and despising "such foul mysteries, answered, ' Though the garland were of imperishable gold, I would not suffer a fly to be killed to gain me it.' For he was to kill some living creatures in his sacrifices, and by those honours to invite the devils to favour me." But he admits that "the impostors whom they style mathematicians I consulted without scruple, because they seemed to use no sacrifice, nor to pray to any spirit for their divinations." The Proconsul Vindicianus, "a wise man and very skilful in physic," "who had with his own proconsular hand put the agonistic garland¹ upon his head," and who seems to have taken a friendly interest in the brilliant young prizeman, took the trouble to argue with him against the delusions of these astrologers. "But at that time neither he nor my dearest Nebridius, a youth singularly good and of a holy fear, who derided the whole body of divinations, could persuade me to cast it aside."

He gives us the means of estimating his continued diligence in study and his singular abilities when he

¹ The prize of some Rhetorical or Poetical competition.

tells us that when "scarce twenty years old, a book of Aristotle's which they call the 'Ten Predicaments' falling into my hands (on whose very name I hung as on something great and divine, so often as my rhetoric-master at Carthage, and others accounted learned, mouthed it with cheeks bursting with pride), I read and understood it unaided. And on my conferring with others, who said that they scarcely understood it with very able tutors, not only orally explaining it, but drawing many things in sand, they could tell me no more of it than I had learned reading it by myself" (IV. 28). "And all the books I could procure of the so-called liberal arts, I read by myself and understood. . . . Whatever was written, either on rhetoric, logic, geometry, music, or arithmetic, by myself, without much difficulty or any instructor, I understood, thou knowest, O my God, because both quickness of understanding and acuteness in discerning is thy gift. . . . For I felt not that those arts were attained with great difficulty even by the studious and talented, until I attempted to explain them to such; when he most excelled in them who followed me not altogether slowly."

At the age of six or seven-and-twenty, he tells us he wrote a book, "*De Apta et Pulchra*," on the Fitting and Beautiful, full of the Manichæan notions which then possessed his mind; it had long been lost when he spoke of it in his "*Confessions*."

"For the space of nine years, then," Augustine thus sums up this period of his life, "from my nineteenth year to my eight-and-twentieth I lived seduced and seducing, deceived and deceiving, in divers lusts;

openly by sciences which they call liberal, secretly in a false-named religion; here proud, there superstitious, everywhere vain. Here hunting after the emptiness of popular praise, down even to theatrical applauses, and poetic prizes, and stripes for grassy garlands; and the follies of shows, and the intemperance of desires; . . . these things did I follow and practise with my friends, deceived by me and with me."

But the end of this portion of his life was approaching. He had never been satisfied with his Manichæan religion; it had presented itself to him at a crisis when his youthful, enthusiastic mind was just fired with a desire for wisdom, and when his search for wisdom in the Apostolic writings had been disappointed; and when its pretensions to esoteric wisdom concealed from the lower order of minds commended itself to his pride of intellect. But he soon found that the professors of the religion at Carthage could not answer the questions his acute mind proposed, and he found also that some of the things which Manes had written on the universe were inconsistent with the ascertained facts of science. "I had read and well remembered much of the philosophers; I compared some of their teachings with the long fables of the Manichæans, and found the former more probable. . . . For they had foretold, many years before, eclipses of the sun and moon—what day and hour and how many digits—nor did their calculation fail, but it came to pass as they foretold; and they wrote down the rules they had found out, and these are known at this day, and by means of them others fore-

tell the year, and month, and day, and hour of an eclipse, and what part of its light, moon and sun shall be eclipsed, and so it shall be as it is foreshowed. . . . And many truths concerning the Creation I had gathered from these men, and saw the reason thereof from calculations, proved by the visible testimonies of the stars; and comparing them with the sayings of Manes which he had written most largely on these subjects, I found no account of solstices and equinoxes or the eclipses of the sun and moon, nor whatever of this sort I had learned in the books of secular philosophy. But I was commanded to believe [what Manichæus had said], and yet it corresponded not with what had been established by calculations and my own sight, but was quite contrary."

But when he started these and such like objections, the professors of the religion at Carthage, while admitting their inability to answer him, referred him to Faustus, the bishop of their sect in Milevis, as capable of solving all his difficulties. "For almost all these nine years wherever with unsettled mind I had been their disciple, I had longed but too intensely for the coming of this Faustus. For the rest of the sect, whom by chance I had lighted upon when unable to solve my objections about these things, still held out to me the coming of Faustus, by conference with whom these and greater difficulties, if I had them, were to be most readily and abundantly cleared." He thought it possible that the sayings of Manes might be capable of some explanation not inconsistent with the scientific truths, and therefore he waited.

At length Faustus came to Carthage, and we have,

at some length, an interesting account of him. "I found him a man of pleasing discourse, and who could speak fluently and in better terms, yet still but the self-same things which they [the followers of the sect at Carthage] were wont to say. But what availed the utmost neatness of the cupbearer to my thirst for a more precious draught? My ears were already cloyed with the like; nor did they, therefore, seem to me better because better said; nor therefore true because eloquent; nor the soul therefore wise because the face was comely and the language graceful." And when Augustine came to converse with him in private, "I found him first utterly ignorant of liberal sciences save grammar, and that but in an ordinary way. But because he had read some of Tully's Orations, a very few books of Seneca, some things of the poets, and such few volumes of his own sect as were written in Latin, and was daily practised in speaking, he acquired a certain eloquence which proved the more pleasing and seductive because under the guidance of a good wit, and with a kind of natural gracefulness. . . . But when it was clear that he was ignorant of those arts in which I thought he excelled, I began to despair of his opening and solving the difficulties which perplexed me . . . which, when I proposed to him to be considered and discussed, he, so far, modestly shrank from the burden. For he knew that he knew not these things, and was not ashamed to confess it. For he was not one of those talking persons, many of whom I had endured, who undertook to teach me these things and said nothing. But this man had a heart which, though not right towards Thee, was not

yet altogether treacherous to himself. . . . Even for this I liked him the better. For fairer is the modesty of a candid mind than the knowledge of those things which I desired." On the other hand, Faustus began to read literature under the guidance of Augustine, and this, no doubt, would help to disabuse Augustine's mind of any lingering tendency to look up to one who was inferior to himself. "Thus that Faustus, to so many a snare of death, had now, neither willing nor witting it, begun to loosen that snare wherein I was taken. For Thy hands, O my God, in the secret purpose of Thy providence, did not forsake my soul ; and out of my mother's heart's blood, through her tears night and day poured out, was a sacrifice offered for me unto Thee ; and Thou didst deal with me by wondrous ways. Thou didst it, O my God : for *the steps of a man are ordered by the Lord, and He shall dispose his way* (Ps. xxxvii. 23), or how shall we obtain salvation but from Thy hand, remaking what it made?" (v. 13).

Augustine did not, however, openly detach himself from the Manichæans, but "settled to be content with the way he had fallen upon, unless something more eligible should dawn upon him."

He now resolved to remove to Rome. His friends urged upon him that higher gains and higher dignities were within the reach of his great abilities on that grander field for their exercise. And he was not insensible to this argument. But what decided him was the riotous conduct of the students at Carthage : "They burst in audaciously and with gestures almost frantic into the school of one whose pupils they are

not, and disturb the order which any one hath established for the good of his scholars. Divers outrages they commit with a wonderful stolidity, punishable by law, did not custom uphold them. . . . The manners which when a student I would not fall into, I was fain as a teacher to endure in others." He was assured that in Rome "the young men studied more peacefully, and were kept quiet under a restraint of a more regular discipline."

He tried to get away without a painful leave-taking with his mother when he was going to embark; but she, suspecting his intention, followed him to the shore, holding him by force that either she might keep him back or he might take her with him. He feigned that he was not going, but that he had a friend whom he desired to see off, and whom he could not leave till the wind was fair for the ship to sail. She refused to return home without him, and he persuaded her then to take shelter in a place hard by the ship where was an oratory in memory of the blessed Cyprian. "That night I privily departed. And what, O Lord, was she with so many tears asking of Thee but that Thou wouldest not suffer me to sail? But Thou, in the depth of Thy counsels, and hearing the main point of her desire, regardedst not what she then asked, that Thou mightest give her what she ever asked. The wind blew and swelled our sails and withdrew the shore from our sight. And she on the morrow was there, frantic with sorrow, and with complaints and groans filled Thy ears, who didst then disregard them; and the earthly part of her affection to me was chastened by the allotted scourges of sorrows. For

she loved my being with her as mothers do, but much more than many; and she knew not how great joy Thou wert about to work for her out of my absence. She knew not, therefore did she weep and wail,—and yet, after accusing my treachery and hard-heartedness, she betook herself again to intercede to Thee for me—went to her wonted place, and I to Rome.”

At Rome Augustine took up his residence with a Manichæan (“Rome secretly harbouring many of them”), and associated not only with the disciples, but also with those whom they call the “elect,” but he held to their religion loosely; freely discouraged his host in his over-confidence in their teaching; and for himself was inclined to adopt the Agnostic doctrines attributed, but falsely, he says, to the Academic philosophers.

He was seized with fever almost immediately on his arrival in Rome. On his recovery he began to seek pupils; but he soon found that, if in Carthage the young men occasionally disturbed the schools to which they did not belong by rushing rudely into them, at Rome it was a common custom for the students to agree together to leave the teacher to whom they did belong without paying their fees, and to transfer themselves *en masse* to another school.

Just at this time the city of Milan had applied to the Prefect of Rome to send them a rhetoric reader for their city; he would, no doubt, be one of the chief professors of the Imperial Schools maintained in that city at the Government expense.

The Prefect of Rome at this time was the well-known Symmachus, a heathen, but respected by

Christians as well as heathens for his high character. Augustine applied to him through some of his Roman friends, satisfied the prefect—himself esteemed the most eloquent orator of his time—of his qualifications, and received the appointment.

Augustine had only been in Rome six months ; he had, therefore, hardly had time to make himself acquainted with the magnificent monuments of its ancient grandeur before he quitted it. We may make a useful synchronism by noting that the time of his residence was in the year following that in which Symmachus had headed a deputation of senators to Gratian at Milan to ask, in vain, that the Altar of Victory, which Gratian had removed from the Senate-house, might be restored, and in the year preceding the death of Pope Damasus.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF MILAN.

Description of Milan—Intercourse with Ambrose—His Mother rejoins Him—His Friends: Alypius, Nebridius—Their search after Truth and the Happy Life—The Scheme of a New Society—Reads the Neo-Platonists, convinced of the truth of the Catholic Religion—Story of Victorinus's Conversion.

THE newly-appointed professor of rhetoric of the University of Milan would travel from Rome along the Flaminian way, using the Imperial posts, for which Symmachus, the prefect of Rome, would give him, as a state *employé*, the requisite permit. Arrived at Milan he would find it inferior to the immense magnitude and monumental grandeur of Rome, but still a great city, with fine, though modern public buildings and numerous palaces; its squares and public places crowded with soldiers, courtiers, citizens; in short, with all the busy—and all the idle—population of a great capital; for Milan was the seat of the court and government of the young Valentinian. It was the see of the great statesman-bishop, Ambrose.

Augustine's "Confessions," it is true, are a record of his spiritual experiences, but still it is a curious illustration of his subjective character of mind, that

his nine years in Carthage affords us notices of nothing but students and Manichæans ; and his six months' residence in Rome presents us again with nothing but Manichæans and students. It is equally curious to see how, when he arrives in Milan, Ambrose at once fills the whole sphere of his recollections : "To Milan I came, to Ambrose the bishop."

As Master of Rhetoric in Milan, Augustine held a public position of some dignity, which would at once introduce him into society. The bishop seems to have received him, Manichæan though he was, with kindness, and at once to have exercised a strong influence over him. "That man of God," he says, "received me as a father, and showed me an episcopal kindness on my coming. Thenceforth I began to love him ; at first, indeed, not as a teacher of the truth (which I utterly despaired of in Thy Church), but as a person kind towards myself ; and I listened to him diligently preaching to the people, not with the intent I ought, for of the matter I was careless and scornful, but, as it were [with the natural interest of a rhetoric professor], testing his eloquence, whether it answered to its fame, or flowed fuller or lower than was reported. And I was delighted with the sweetness of his discourse, more recondite, yet in manner less winning and harmonious, than that of Faustus. Of the matter, however, there was no comparison ; for the one was wandering amid Manichæan delusions, the other teaching salvation most soundly. But 'salvation is far from the ungodly' (Ps. cxix. 155), such as I then stood before him ; and yet was I drawing nearer by little and little, and unconsciously.

For though I took no pains to learn what he spake, but only to hear how he spake (for that empty care alone was left me, despairing of a way open for man to Thee); yet, together with the words which I would choose, came also into my mind the things which I would refuse, for I could not separate them. And while I opened my heart to admit 'how eloquently he spake,' there also entered 'how true he spake;' but this by degrees." In a very short time the preaching of Ambrose convinced Augustine that many of the opinions which the Manichæans had attributed to the Catholic Church were not really held by it, and thus swept away misconceptions which had prejudiced him against the truth. On the other hand, he had never been satisfied in the Manichæan doctrine; his intercourse with Faustus had proved to him that no satisfaction was to be attained in it; and the teaching of Ambrose completed his emancipation from its influence. "I settled, so far, that the Manichæans were to be abandoned; judging that, even while doubting, I might not continue in that sect to which I already preferred some of the philosophers; to the philosophers notwithstanding, for that they were without the saving name of Christ, I utterly refused to commit the care of my sick soul. I determined, therefore, to be a catechumen in the Church, to which I had been commended by my parents, till something certain should dawn upon me whither I might steer my course" (v. 23, 24).

Another powerful influence was also brought to bear upon him; his mother joined him in Milan, after a stormy voyage, "in which she had comforted

the very sailors, assuring them of a safe arrival, because Thou hadst by a vision assured her thereof."

When Augustine told her of the change which had taken place in his religious opinions, "that he was now no longer a Manichæan, though not yet a Catholic Christian, she was not overjoyed as at something unexpected, . . . her heart was shaken with no tumultuous exultation when she heard that what she daily with tears desired of Thee was already in so great part realized ; in that though I had not yet attained the truth I was rescued from falsehood ; but as assured that Thou, who hadst promised the whole, wouldest one day give the rest, she replied to me most calmly, and with a heart full of confidence 'She believed in Christ that before she departed this life she should see me a Catholic believer.'"

Augustine tells us that he heard Ambrose every Lord's Day "rightly expounding the Word of Truth" among the people, and was more and more convinced that all the arguments he had been accustomed to hear from the Manichæans against the Scriptures were unfounded ; but still he was not convinced of the truth of the Catholic doctrine. He regrets that he had little opportunity of private conference with the bishop, for, though the bishop was accessible to all, yet he was usually reading, and Augustine hesitated to interrupt his studies. It would seem as if the bishop, after the fashion of hot countries, sat habitually in a corner of the cloister, or verandah, which surrounded the open court of the house, so that people could come and go without disturbing him ; and

those who wished to speak to him could watch for an opportunity of finding him disengaged.

Besides his brother, Augustine had in Milan a circle of friends, and among them two of the oldest and dearest, whom he here takes occasion to introduce more fully to his readers.

"Alypius was born in the same town with me, of persons of chief rank there, but younger than I. For he had studied under me, both when I first lectured in our town, and afterwards at Carthage ; and he loved me much because I seemed to him kind and learned ; and I him for his great towardliness to virtue which was eminent in one so young."

At first, indeed, when Augustine had gone to Carthage as a teacher and Alypius had gone as a student, there was for a time no communication between them, owing to some disagreement between Augustine and the young man's father, in which Augustine supposed that Alypius shared his father's quarrel.

Alypius had given himself up to the Carthaginian passion for the circus and neglected his studies ; and Augustine regretted that he should throw away his promise of distinction, yet felt that he had no way of interfering with him "either by the kindness of a friend or the authority of a master." But Alypius had also regretted the estrangement, and made the first advances to a restoration of intercourse : "he began to greet me, come sometimes into my lecture-room, hear a little and be gone." But as one day I sat in my accustomed place, with my scholars before me he entered, greeted me, sat down, and applied his mind

to what I then handled. I had by chance a passage in hand, which while I was explaining, a likeness from the Circensian races occurred to me as likely to make what I would convey pleasanter and plainer, seasoned with biting mockery of those whom that madness enthralled. God, thou knowest that I thought not then of curing Alypius of that infection. But he took it wholly to himself, and thought that I said it simply for his sake. And what another would have taken as occasion of offence with me, that right-minded youth took as a ground of being offended at himself, and loving me more fervently. For Thou hadst said it long ago and put it into Thy book, 'Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee'" (Prov. ix. 8). He there-upon gave up his attendance at the circus altogether, and "prevailed with his unwilling father" that he might be the scholar of Augustine.

Augustine tells an anecdote of Alypius during his student life in Carthage. "When he was yet studying under me at Carthage and was thinking over at mid-day in the Forum what he was to say by heart (as scholars use to practise), walking up and down by himself before the judgment-seat, with his note-book and pen, a young man, a lawyer, bringing a hatchet, got in privily, unperceived by Alypius, as far as the leaden gratings which fence in the silversmiths' shops, and began to cut away the lead. But the noise of the hatchet being heard the silversmiths beneath began to make a stir, and sent to apprehend whomever they should find. But he, hearing their voices, ran away, leaving the hatchet, fearing to be taken with it. Alypius now, who had not seen him enter, was aware of

his going and saw with what speed he made away, and being desirous to know the matter entered the place ; where, finding the hatchet, he was standing with it in his hand wondering and considering, when those that had been sent found him thus alone with the hatchet in his hand. They seized him and haled him away, boasting that they had taken a notorious thief, the people in the market-place gathering together about them, and so he was being led away to be taken before the judge. . . . As he was being led away a certain architect met them who had the chief charge of the public buildings. He had divers times seen Alypius at a certain senator's house, to whom he often went to pay his respects ; who at once recognising him, took him aside by the hand, and inquiring the occasion of so great a calamity, heard the whole matter, and bade all present, amid much uproar and threats, to go with him. So they came to the house of the young man who had done the deed. There before the door was a boy so young as to be likely, not apprehending any harm to his master, to disclose the whole. For he had attended his master to the market-place. Whom as soon as Alypius remembered he told the architect ; and he, showing the hatchet to the boy, asked him 'whose that was?' 'Ours,' he immediately replied, and being further questioned, he discovered everything" (VI. 15).

After Alypius had completed his studies at Carthage he had gone to Rome, and had been appointed Assessor to the Count of the Italian Treasury, and had shown an unusual integrity in his office. When Augustine had gone to Rome the friendship between

them was renewed. "Him had I found at Rome, and he clave to me by a most strong tie, and went with me to Milan, both that he might not leave me, and that he might practise something of the law he had studied, more to please his parents than himself. There he had thrice sat as assessor with much uncorruptness, wondered at by others; he wondering at others rather who could prefer gold to honesty. He, being such, did at that time cleave to me, and with me wavered in purpose what course of life was to be taken" (vi. 16).

His other chief friend was Nebridius, "who having left his native place near Carthage, yea, and Carthage itself where he had much lived, having left his excellent family estate and house and a mother behind, who was not to follow him, had come to Milan for no other reason but that with me he might live in a most ardent search after truth and wisdom. Like me he sighed, like me he wavered, an ardent searcher after true life, and a most acute examiner of the most difficult questions. Thus there were there then the mouths of three indigent persons sighing out their wants one to another, and waiting upon Thee that Thou mightest give them their meat in due season."

It is a touching spectacle, that of these three friends "searching after truth and wisdom;" and Augustine represents their vague desires and their wavering judgment with his usual skill. At one time they thought, "Perish everything; dismiss we these empty vanities and betake ourselves to the one search for truth. Life is vain, death uncertain. . . . Wherefore delay then to abandon worldly hopes and give our-

selves wholly to seek after God and the blessed life?" Then comes the opposite view: "But wait! Even these things are pleasant; we must not lightly abandon them. It would be easy for us now to obtain some preferment, and then what should we wish for more? We have store of powerful friends; if nothing else offer and we are in haste, at least a presidentship may be given us, and a wife with some money, that she increase not our charges, and this shall be the bound of desire. Many great men and most worthy of imitation have given themselves to the study of wisdom in the state of marriage."

We seem to gather that the latter alternative was kept before their minds by the prudent Monica, who desired to see her son break off the illegitimate connection in which he still lived, and to have him married as a step towards his entry upon a Christian life. Continued effort was made to have him married; "a maiden was asked in marriage, two years under the fit age; I wooed, I was promised, chiefly through my mother's pains, that so, once married, the health-giving baptism might cleanse me." Monica prevailed so far that he consented to part with his concubine, who returned to Africa, vowing a continent life, and leaving their son Adeodatus behind with his father. But with the prospect of waiting two years before the marriage which had been arranged, he fell away again into his old sin, and took another concubine.

Meantime the friends continued their search after truth, and their speculations as to the happiest mode of life, and, like many other enthusiastic young

men in all ages, they contemplated the organization of a new society of their own on what seemed to them sound principles. "Many of us friends detesting the turbulent turmoils of human life, had debated, and were now almost resolved on living apart from business and the bustle of men. And this was to be thus obtained. We were to bring whatever we might severally procure, and make one household of all; so that through the truth of our friendship nothing should belong specially to any; but the whole thus derived from all, should as a whole belong to each, and all to all. We thought there might be some ten persons in this society, some of whom were very rich, especially Romanianus, our townsman, from childhood a very familiar friend of mine, whom the grievous perplexities of his affairs had brought up to Court, who was the most earnest for this project; and therein was his voice of great weight because his ample estate far exceeded any of the rest. We had settled also that two annual officers, as it were, should provide all things necessary, the rest being undisturbed. But," he tells us with a touch of humour, "when we began to consider whether the wives which some of us already had, and others hoped to have, would allow this, all that plan which was being so well moulded, fell to pieces in our hands" (vi. 24).

Meantime Augustine was unceasingly revolving in his mind the great problems of religion, and gradually working towards the Catholic faith. To summarize his wonderfully interesting account of the growth of his mind out of error into truth would be to do injustice

to it; to give it at length would be to transcribe many chapters of the book from which we have already made perhaps too lengthy extracts; and the book itself is within every one's reach;¹ it must suffice therefore to say here that he had first to extricate his mind from the material notions of God, which he had imbibed from the Manichæan theosophy. Then the problem of the origin of evil took possession of his mind, and he had to get rid of the Eastern theory, embodied in the Manichæan system, of two rival principles, and to arrive at length at the conclusion of the Catholic faith, that evil is not a substance, but "the perversion of the will turned aside from God" (VII. 22). Lastly, he had to think out and grasp for himself the Catholic teaching of the unity of God and man in Christ Jesus.

He tells us that he was much indebted to certain Platonist writers (whom he frankly tells us he read in a Latin translation by Victorinus), who served to him, as to so many others, as a middle term in the transition from Pagan philosophy to the gospel of Christ. Lastly, he took up again the writings of the New Testament, and especially the Epistles of S. Paul, and the difficulties he had once found vanished away; his conceptions of the truth were corrected and completed; and, so far as intellectual conviction went, he held the Catholic faith.

But though convinced, he was not converted; he still lived in sin, he still held back from the open

¹ Messrs. Parker, 379, Strand, publish an edition of the "Confessions of St. Augustine" for a shilling. Our quotations are taken from it.

profession of a Christian. In his own words, "he had found the goodly pearl, which, selling all that he had, he ought to have bought," and he hesitated.

In this state he went to Simplicianus, who had been Ambrose's father in the faith, and who was subsequently his successor in the see, and told him his spiritual history. When Simplicianus heard that he had been reading Victorinus's translations of the Platonists, he told him the spiritual history of Victorinus, whom he had intimately known in Rome. "A man most learned and skilled in the liberal sciences, who had read and weighed so many works of the philosophers ; the instructor of so many noble senators ; who as a monument of his excellent discharge of his office had the honour of a statue erected to him in the Roman Forum ; who to old age had been a worshipper of idols and partaker of the sacrilegious rites, to which almost all the nobility of Rome were given up ; and had kept alive among the people the love of the ancient gods, whom with thundering eloquence he had so many years defended ; but who had become a child of Christ, a new-born babe of the font, submitting his neck to the yoke of humility, and subduing his forehead to the reproach of the Cross."

He used to read, Simplicianus said, the holy Scripture, he studiously sought out and read the Christian writings, and used to say to Simplicianus, not openly, but privately as to a friend, "Understand that I am already a Christian." To which he answered, "I will not believe it, nor will I rank you among Christians, till I see you in the Church of Christ." The other in banter replied, "Do walls then make

Christians?" And this statement and reply and rejoinder were often renewed between them. For Victorinus feared to offend his friends, proud demon worshippers, from the height of whose Babylonian dignity he feared the weight of enmity would fall upon him. But after by reading and earnest thought he had gathered firmness, and feared to be *denied by Christ before the holy angels should he now be afraid to confess Him before men*, he became bold-faced against vanity and shamefaced towards the truth, and suddenly and unexpectedly said to Simplicianus (as he himself told it), "Let us go to the church, I wish to be made a Christian." "And having been admitted to the first sacrament and become a catechumen, not long after he further gave in his name that he might be regenerated by Baptism; Rome wondering, the Church rejoicing. When the hour was come for making profession of his faith (which at Rome the candidates for baptism deliver from an elevated place, in the sight of all the faithful, in a set form of words committed to memory) the presbyters, he said, offered Victorinus (as was done to those who seemed likely through bashfulness to be alarmed) to make his profession more privately. But he chose rather to profess his salvation in the presence of the holy multitude. . . . Then when he went up to make his profession, all, as they knew him, whispered his name one to another in a tone of gratulation. And who there knew him not? There ran a low murmur through all the mouths of the rejoicing multitude, Victorinus! Victorinus! Sudden was the burst of rapture when they saw him; sud-

denly were they hushed that they might hear him" (VIII. 35).

"When Simplicianus related to me this of Victorinus, I was on fire to imitate him; for this end had he related it. But when he added that in the days of Julian a law was made forbidding Christians to teach the liberal sciences or oratory; and how Victorinus had chosen rather to abandon the wordy school than Thy *Word*, by which *Thou makest eloquent the tongues of the dumb* (Wisd. x. 21), he seemed to me not more resolute than blessed in having thus found opportunity to wait on Thee alone. Which thing I was sighing for; bound as I was not with another's irons but by my own iron will. My will the enemy held, and thence had made a chain for me and bound me. For of a froward will was a lust made; and a lust served became custom; and custom not resisted became necessity. By which links, as it were, joined together (whence I called it a chain) hard bondage held me enthralled. But that new will which had begun to be in me, freely to serve Thee, and to wish to enjoy Thee, O God, the only assured pleasantness, was not yet able to overcome my former wilfulness strengthened of age. Thus did my two wills, one new and the other old, one carnal, the other spiritual, strive within me, and by their discord undid my soul."

CHAPTER IX.

HIS CONVERSION.

Pontitianus tells him of Antony the Hermit—Story of the Conversion of the Two Friends—Augustine in the throes of Conversion—Hears the Voice, "Take up and read": takes up St. Paul, reads Rom. xiii.—Resolves to give up the World and lead an Ascetic Life—Alypius resolves to take the same step.

WHILE Augustine was in this state of mind, "on a day there came to see me and Alypius (Nebridius being absent, I recollect not why) one Pontitianus, our countryman so far as being an African, in high office in the emperor's court. What he would with us I knew not, but we sat down to converse, and it happened that upon a table for some game before us he observed a book, took, opened it, and contrary to his expectation found it the Apostle Paul; for he had thought of some of those books which I was wearying myself in teaching. Whereat, smiling and looking at me, he expressed his joy and wonder that he had on a sudden found this book, and this only, before my eyes. For he was a Christian, and baptized, and often bowed himself before Thee, our God, in the church, in frequent and continued prayers.

"When, then, I had told him that I bestowed very great pains upon those Scriptures, a conversation arose

(suggested by some remark of his), on Antony, the Egyptian monk, whose name was in high reputation among Thy servants, though to that hour unknown to us. Which when he discovered, he dwelt the more upon that subject, informing and wondering at our ignorance of one so eminent. But we stood amazed, hearing Thy wonderful works most fully attested, in times so recent and almost in our own, wrought in the true Faith and Catholic Church. We all wondered ; we, that they were so great, and he, that they had not reached us.

“Thence his discourse turned to the flocks in the monasteries and their holy ways, a sweet-smelling savour unto Thee, and the fruitful deserts of the wilderness, whereof we knew nothing. And there was a monastery at Milan, full of good brethren, under the city walls, under the fostering care of Ambrose, and we knew it not. He went on with his discourse, and we listened in intent silence.

“He told us then how one afternoon at Trier when the emperor was taken up with the Circensian games, he and three others his companions, went out to walk in gardens near the city walls, and there as they happened to walk in pairs, one went apart with him, and the other two wandered by themselves ; and these in their wanderings lighted upon a certain cottage inhabited by certain of Thy servants, *poor in spirit of whom is the Kingdom of Heaven*, and there they found a little book of the life of Antony. This, one of them began to read and admire, and kindle at it ; and as he read to meditate on taking up such a life, and giving over his secular service to

serve thee. And these two were of those whom they call Agents for the public affairs. Then suddenly, filled with an holy love and a sober shame, in anger with himself, he cast his eyes upon his friend, saying : ' Tell me, I pray thee, what would we attain by all these labours of ours ? What aim we at ? What serve we for ? Can our hopes in court rise higher than to be the emperor's favourites ? And in this what is there not brittle and full of perils ? And by how many perils arrive we at a greater peril ? And when arrive we thither ? But a friend of God, if I wish it, I become now at once.' And after reading a while longer, during which his soul was ' in pain with the travail of a new life,' he turned again to his friend and said : ' Now have I broken loose from those our hopes, and am resolved to serve God ; and this from this hour, in this place, I begin upon. If thou likest not to imitate me do not oppose me.' And his friend answered that he would partake so glorious a service and so glorious a reward. Then Pontitianus, the other with him, came in search of them, to whom they told their resolve, and begged them if they would not join them, not to molest them. Pontitianus and his friend piously congratulated the other two friends, and begged their prayers, and so with hearts lingering on the earth went away to the palace ; but the others fixing their heart on heaven, remained in the cottage. And both had affianced brides, who, when they heard thereof, also dedicated their virginity unto God."

Then follows one of the most remarkable of the many remarkable passages in the book, where Augus-

tine describes the way in which a man sometimes, suddenly, for the first time obtains a sight of his real self :—"Such was the story of Pontitianus ; but Thou, O Lord, while he was speaking, didst turn me round towards myself, taking me from behind my back, where I had placed me, unwilling to observe myself, and setting me before my face, that I might see how foul I was, crooked and defiled, bespotted and ulcerous. And I beheld and stood aghast ; and whither to flee from myself I found not. And if I sought to turn mine eye from off myself, he went on with his relation; and then again didst Thou set me over against myself, and thrustedst me before my eyes that 'I might find out mine iniquity and hate it' (Ps. xxxvi. 2). I had known it, but made as though I saw it not, winked at it and forgot it. . . . I was gnawed within, and exceedingly confounded with an horrible shame while Pontitianus was speaking. And he having brought to a close his tale, and the business he came for, went his way and I into myself.

"What said I not against myself, with what scourges of condemnation lashed I not my soul, that it might follow me, striving to go after Thee. Yet it drew back ; refused, but excused itself. All arguments were spent and confuted ; there remained a mute shrinking ; and she feared as she would death, to be restrained from the flux of that custom whereby she was wasting to death." Then he turned upon Alypius : "What ails us ? I exclaim : what is it ? what heardest thou ? the unlearned start up and take Heaven by force ; and we, with our learning, and without heart, lo ! where we wallow in flesh and blood."

Some such words he uttered and tore himself away. "A little garden there was to our lodging, which we had the use of, as of the whole house, for the master of the house, our host, was not living there. Thither the tumult of my heart hurried me, where no man might hinder the hot contention wherein I had engaged with myself, until it should end as Thou knewest, I knew not." Alypius followed him, "for his presence did not lessen my privacy, and how could he forsake me so disturbed." And he enters into an analysis of the contest between the "will" and "will not," which may be compared with St. Paul's famous description in the seventh chapter to the Romans. "The mind commands the body and it obeys instantly ; the mind commands itself and is resisted. The mind commands the hand to be moved, and such readiness is there that command is scarce distinct from obedience. The mind commands the mind, its own self, and yet it doth not. Whence this monstrousness ? . . . It doth not command entirely, therefore, what it commandeth is not. For were the will entire, it would not even command it to be, because it would already be. It is, therefore, no monstrousness partly to will partly to nill, but a disease of the mind. . . . They are vain talkers who, observing that there are two wills, affirm that there are two minds in men, one good, the other evil. . . . Myself, when I was deliberating upon serving the Lord my God now, as I had long purposed, it was I who willed, I who nilled, I, I myself. I neither willed entirely nor nilled entirely. Therefore was I at strife with myself, and rent asunder by myself.

And this rent befell me against my will, and yet indicated not the presence of another mind, but the punishment of my own. 'Therefore, it was no more I that wrought it, but sin that dwelt in me ;' the punishment of a sin more freely committed in that I was a son of Adam. Let them no more say then, when they perceive two conflicting wills in one man that the conflict is between two contrary souls of two contrary substances, from two contrary principles, one good the other bad" . . . but "where one deliberates one soul fluctuates between two contrary wills" . . . "it is the same" soul which willed not this nor that with an entire will ; and, therefore, is rent asunder with grievous perplexities, while, out of truth, it prefers this, but out of habit sets not that aside" (VIII. 20-24).

At last he could no longer bear even the presence of Alypius, but going to another part of the garden, he cast himself down under a fig-tree, giving full vent to his tears . . . "and I sent up those sorrowful words, 'How long? how long? To-morrow, and to-morrow ! Why not now? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?' So was I speaking, and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when lo ! I heard from a neighbouring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting and oft repeating, 'Take up and read, take up and read.' Instantly my countenance altered ; I began to think most intently whether children were wont in any kind of play to sing such words ; and I could not remember ever to have heard the like. So checking the torrent of my tears, I arose ; interpreting it to be no

other than a command from God, to open the book and read the first chapter I should find. For I had heard of Antony that coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition as if what was being read was spoken to him : ‘ Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and come and follow Me,’ and by such oracle he was forthwith converted unto Thee. Eagerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting, for there had I laid the volume of the apostle when I arose thence. I seized, I opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell : ‘ Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying ; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof.’ No further would I read, nor needed I ; for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light, as it were, of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.

“ Then putting my finger between, or some other mark, I shut the volume, and with a calmed countenance made it known to Alypius. And what was wrought in him, which I knew not, he thus showed me. He asked to see what I had read : I showed him ; and he looked even further than I had read, and I knew not what followed. This followed : ‘ Him that is weak in the faith receive ye ;’ which he applied to himself, and disclosed to me. And by this admonition was he strengthened : and by a good resolution and purpose, and most corresponding to his character, wherein he did always very far differ

from me, for the better, without any turbulent delay he joined me. Thence we go in to my mother ; we tell her : she rejoiceth : we relate in order how it took place ; she leaps for joy, and triumpheth and blesseth Thee ‘ Who art able to do above that which we ask or think ;’ for she perceived that Thou hadst given her more for me than she was wont to beg by her pitiful and most sorrowful groanings. For Thou convertedst me unto Thyself, so that I sought neither wife, nor any hope of this world, standing in that Rule of Faith where Thou hadst showed me unto her in a vision so many years before. ‘ O Lord, I am Thy servant : I am Thy servant and the son of Thine handmaid. Thou hast broken my bonds asunder. I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of praise.’ ”

CHAPTER X.

THE RETREAT AT CASSIACUM.

Augustine resigns his Professorship—Retires with his Friends to a Villa at Cassiacum—Their mode of life there—The discussion “Against the Academicians ;” “On Order ;” “On the Happy Life”—His “Soliloquies”—Return to Milan—His Baptism—Journey to Ostia—Conversation between Augustine and Monica—Death of Monica : Her Funeral—He returns to Rome.

AUGUSTINE accepted the verses of St. Paul’s 13th chapter to the Romans, to which his attention had been thus remarkably¹ directed, as the rule of his life, and resolved to act up to their letter, abandoning his profession, adopting a life of continence, and embracing that ascetic mode of life whose description, in the life of Antony, has so fired his imagination.

¹ We think it right to say that we deliberately abstain from using the word “providentially” here, and to say that the example of even so great a man as Augustine ought not to lead others into the same superstitious practice. It was the custom of the heathen when in doubt to open a copy of the *Æneid* of Virgil and accept the first lines upon which the eye alighted as a kind of oracular solution of the doubt ; this superstition was called the *Sortes Virgilianæ*. It is not a less unreasonable superstition when the book used is the Bible instead of Virgil. There are many proofs that Augustine, great as he was, was not free from, and was even by temperament inclined to, the superstitious spirit of his time.

Thus, his search after the truth led him to embrace the Catholic Faith : his study of the happiest mode of life led him to the Ascetic Life.

Augustine resolved to fulfil the duties of his professorship for the three weeks which yet intervened before the Vacation of the Vintage, and then without ostentation to retire from the profession of rhetoric altogether. He was able to give, as "a secondary and not feigned excuse," for this step, that "in this summer his lungs began to give way amid too great literary labour, and too much speaking," so that "he could not draw a deep breath without difficulty and pain." Alypius and Nebridius agreed to accept baptism with him. Verecundus, one of his Milanese friends, had a country house at Cassiacum, in the neighbourhood of the city, which he put at the disposal of Augustine and his friends as a temporary retreat. M. Poujoulat identifies Cassiacum with the modern Cassago de Brianza, seven or eight leagues from Milan ; and the ancient palace of the Visconti of Modrone occupies the site of the villa of Verecundus. It is situated on the summit of a little hill in a rich valley surrounded by mountains ; a little stream flowing in cascades through a wooded ravine passes near the palace, which, by the help of a little aqueduct, would supply the baths which form so prominent a feature in the story.

Hither Augustine retired when the Vacation of the Vintage released him from his professorship ; and here he spent the seven months which intervened till the following Easter summoned him to Milan for his baptism, *i.e.*, from Aug. 23, 386, till about March

23, 387. Here were gathered round him some of those friends who were attached by natural ties, or had attached themselves by ties of friendship, to his fortunes ; Alypius and Nebridius, his ancient friends ; two scholars of twenty years of age, Licentius, the son of Romanianus, and Trigetius, a youth who had abandoned a military career for the study of philosophy ; his brother Navigius ; two of his relations, Lastidianus and Rusticus. His son, Adeodatus, also was one of the company, of whom his father gives a charming sketch :—"We joined with us the boy Adeodatus, born, after the flesh, of my sin. Excellently hadst Thou made him. He was not quite fifteen, and in wit surpassed many grave and learned men. I confess unto Thee Thy gifts, O Lord my God, Creator of all, and abundantly able to reform all our deformities ; for I had no part in that boy but the sin. For that we brought him up in Thy discipline, it was Thou, none else, had inspired us with it. I confess unto Thee Thy gifts. There is a book of ours entitled 'The Master;' it is a dialogue between him and me. Thou knowest that all there ascribed to the person conversing with me were his ideas in his sixteenth year. Much besides, and yet more admirable, I found in him. That talent struck awe into me ; and who but Thou could be the workmaster of such wonders ? Soon didst Thou take his life from the earth." ("Conf.," ix. 14.) Evodius also joined them, "a young man of our own city [Thagaste], who, being an officer of the Court, was, before us, converted to Thee and baptized, and, quitting his secular warfare, girded himself to the heavenly warfare."

Their happy life in this charming retirement at Cassiacum was something like a realization of their search for truth and the happy life. They rose early, and sometimes spent the morning in reading; Licentius and Trigetius were still the scholars of the ex-professor of rhetoric; they had their couches in his chamber; he read some classic author with them; Licentius fancied himself a poet and was busy with some verses on the loves of Pyramus and Thisbe. He watched over them with affection, their youthful gaiety pleased him. The whole society dined together at mid-day; frugality presided over their repasts; they satisfied hunger without clogging the vivacity of the mind. In the afternoons they were accustomed to assemble under a great tree in the adjoining meadow, and there spend the hours in pleasant and profitable discussion of the great subjects which occupied all their minds. If the weather did not permit this outdoor gathering, they assembled in a hall of the baths attached to the villa. Of these discussions Augustine was naturally the life and soul; it was in fact a little school of philosophy, a little Academe of which Augustine was the Plato. Some of the members of the society had their tablets always ready—the reporting of spoken discourses was perhaps even more common, and as correctly done, in those days as in these—and the rapid stylus noted down all that was said. Sometimes the discussion was prolonged into the twilight, and a servant came running with a torch to the great tree, or brought a lamp into the hall of the baths, that the writers might not lose any of their master's words. Augustine did

not seek his couch till he had prayed to God ; and then he devoted either the former or the latter portion of the night to long and profound meditations.

Augustine's literary habits led him at once to make use of the notes of these discussions, to revise and edit them, and put them into a form of permanent usefulness. In imitation of the Dialogues of Plato he sketches, with exquisite literary skill, the accidental origin of these books, retains the form of dialogue in which they actually grew, and relieves the grave discussion with the little incidents by which it was actually broken up.

The book "Against the Academicians" is thus based upon, and retains the form of, one of these philosophic discussions. In his graphic introduction Augustine enables us almost to see the beauty of the autumn day, and the broad spreading tree in the meadow of Cassiacum, and the group of friends seated under its shade. We are made auditors of the whole discussion, as Alypius defends the cause of the Academicians and Augustine argues against them, and the other friends put in a word now and then, and the young scholars rapidly write down the conversation, and Monica hangs upon her son's words. The Academicians—*i.e.* the philosophers who so called themselves in this fourth century—maintained that man was not able to discover truth, but that happiness consisted in the search for it. Licentius maintained this opinion. Trigetius maintained, on the contrary, that to be happy it is necessary to be wise and virtuous, but the mere search after wisdom and virtue

does not suffice for happiness. Augustine, summing up the debate, defines that the happiness of life consists in an exact conformity of the human reason to man's instincts, desires, and wants ; and that there could be no happiness possible if reason hungering after truth were incapable of satisfying its desire. To declare that it is not possible for us to discover truth, is to declare the uselessness of the faculties which distinguish us from the beasts, it is to annihilate the highest and noblest part of our being. One only arrives at truth after long and painful research, but this research is not without its charm to the intelligence. Wisdom is a star which does not come to shine in our souls as easily as the light of the sun enlightens our eyes. He concludes : " In whatever manner wisdom is to be attained, I see that I do not yet know it. Nevertheless, being only in my thirty-second year, I ought not to despair of acquiring it some day : since I am resolved to apply myself to the search, despising all which men regard as desirable. I confess that the reasons of the Academicians give me much fear in this enterprise ; but I am I think sufficiently armed against them by this discussion. Everybody knows that there are two methods of knowledge—authority and reason. I am persuaded that we ought not in any way to deviate from the authority of Jesus Christ, for I find none more weighty. As for things which one is able to examine by force of reason (for my character is such that I desire with impatience not only to believe the truth, but also to be able to perceive it

by the intellect¹), I hope to find among the Platonicians a doctrine which shall not be opposed to our sacred mysteries."

On the last day of the discussion, night arrives before its conclusion, and a servant brings a torch to light the scene. It is the turn of Alypius to reply; but he concludes the sitting by declaring his pleasure in being overcome: "I cannot sufficiently admire," he says, "how Augustine has treated so pleasantly a subject so thorny, with what force he has triumphed over despair, with what moderation he has put forth his own views, with what clearness he has solved such obscure problems. Oh, my friends, you wait for my reply. Listen rather to the master. We have a chief who can lead us into the secrets of truth, under the inspiration of God himself."

The book "On Order" originated thus:—As Augustine lay awake meditating, according to his custom, the fall of the little stream which flowed past the villa and supplied its baths forced itself upon his attention. In the stillness of the night, the irregularity of the murmur of the fall, now soft now loud, attracted his notice—that rhythmical irregularity which is so visible to the eye in the rocket-like jets which dart at intervals, now in this part now in that, down the fall of the Staubbach at Lauterbrunnen. At that moment Trigetius, sighing in his sleep, disturbed Licentius lying awake—Licentius struck his bed with a stick to make Trigetius

¹ Ita enim jam sum affectus, ut quid sit verum, non credendo solum sed etiam intelligendo, apprehendere impatienter desiderim.

cease. Augustine perceiving that he was awake said, "Do you observe the unequal flow of the stream? What do you think is the cause of it?" Trigetius awoke at their voices and joined in the conversation. Licentius conjectured that it might be the masses of autumn leaves which sometimes at the bends of the stream interrupted its flow. But Licentius expressed surprise that Augustine should be surprised at so small a matter. "But whence then comes surprise," asks Augustine; "what is its origin? if not something extraordinary, something contrary to the evident order of events." "Contrary to the evident order, I admit," replies Licentius, "for as for anything absolutely contrary to order I do not believe in the possibility of such a thing." This was the germ of the discussion which began that night, and was continued next day, and for some following days, on the existence of an absolute order in the midst of the apparent want of order in the universe, which we find in Augustine's book "On Order."

Augustine introduces his mother into the discussion with filial affection. Monica was a woman of acute intelligence as well as a holy soul, and listened with interest to these discussions. But it is easy to see that Augustine's motive for introducing his mother into his works, was the same which led Jerome to introduce the names of Paula and Eustochium into his;¹ the desire to connect her name with his, to publish her virtues and his obligations to her, to share with her whatever reputation his works might attain.

¹ See 'The Fathers for English Readers: Jerome,' p. 152 and p. 208.

He anticipates criticism by putting into the mouth of Monica the remonstrance, "What are you doing? In what books have you ever seen women allowed to enter into such discussions?" "If it should happen," replies he, "that my books should fall into the hands of men who do not, when they have seen my name, ask who is he? and throw them aside [*i.e.* if he should acquire such reputation that men, seeing his name on the title-page, will willingly read what he has written], if not despising the simplicity of the recital they shall read further, these men will not be offended to see me talk philosophy with you, and will not despise any of those whose sentiments are recorded in my writings." He makes a very skilful, artistic use of this introduction of his mother, by contrasting her possession of the truth by the mode of faith with their own search after truth by the method of reason. "Among the ancients," he says, addressing her, "there were women who gave themselves to the study of philosophy, and your philosophy pleases me much. For, not to leave you ignorant of it, my mother, what they call in Greek, philosophy, is called in Latin, the love of wisdom. . . . I should not have condemned you in these memoirs if you had not loved wisdom; still less should I have condemned you if you had loved it as well as me. But I know that you love it still more than you love me, and I know how much you love me! You are so advanced in the divine science, that you are terrified neither by the fear of any misfortune, nor by the dread of death; and this equanimity proclaims, by the consent of all men, the attainment of the very kernel of philosophy; could I

hesitate after that to become myself your disciple?" On the last day of these conversations on Order, the daylight fled before the conclusion was reached, and a lamp was brought into the hall of the baths, where the conversation was being held, that the scribes might see to note on their tablets the words of the master.

The origin of the book "On the Blessed Life," is told in the same way. On the 13th November, 386 A.D., which was Augustine's birthday, all the friends, except Alypius, who had gone into Milan, were assembled at dinner to celebrate the event. After dinner Augustine asked them some questions on true happiness; and for two days they continued after dinner to discuss what constitutes happiness. Various solutions of the question are proposed by the interlocutors. Monica brings their conjectures to an end by suggesting that they only are happy who possess that which they desire, provided that what they desire is good. Augustine, approving and adopting this definition, adds, that the good must be a permanent good, and that only God can be this permanent good; and so leads up to the great conclusion of the discussion that happiness consists in the knowledge and possession of God, and that this ought to be the end and aim of all human endeavour.

Besides the results of these conversations, we have also the fruits of those nightly meditations of which we have spoken above, in a book of "Soliloquies." These also take the form of dialogue, but it is a dialogue between Augustine himself and Reason. The principal subject of them is the two great questions: What is God? What is the soul?

I wish, says Augustine, to know God and the soul.

Do you wish to know nothing more? asks Reason.

In one place,¹ which is very characteristic of the manner of the dialogue, he inquires what are the relations of life and of science to happiness.

Reason.—What do you prefer to know first?

Augustine.—If I am immortal.

Reason.—You love life, then?

Augustine.—I admit it.

Reason.—If you learn that you are immortal shall you be satisfied?

Augustine.—That would doubtless be a great thing, but it would be a small thing to me.

Reason.—But this small thing, if you had it, would make you happy?

Augustine.—Greatly.

Reason.—You would weep no more?

Augustine.—Never more.

Reason.—But if it should turn out that life is such, that it is not given to you to know more than you do know, should you still abstain from weeping?

Augustine.—On the contrary; I should weep as if life were nothing worth.

Reason.—It is not, then, for the sake of life that you love life, but for the sake of knowledge?

Augustine.—It is so.

Reason.—But what if it is precisely knowledge which makes men unhappy?

Augustine.—This cannot be. If it were so no one could be happy. The sole source of my internal unhappiness is my ignorance. If knowledge made men unhappy our unhappiness would be eternal.

¹ "Solil.," lib. ii., c. i.

Reason.—I see, then, what you desire. Since you believe that knowledge cannot make any one unhappy, because it is probable that it is intelligence which makes men happy, and that no one is happy if he does not see, and that he cannot see unless he lives; you wish to live, to see, and to know; but you wish to live in order to see, and to see in order to know.” The book “On the Immortality of the Soul” formed a sequel to the “Soliloquies.”

We have given the interesting story of the origin of these books written at Cassiacum, and a brief note of their subject; our space does not admit of an analysis of them or of extracts from them; but we may say a few words as to their general character. They were written at an interesting crisis, at the transition not only of Augustine but of the world, from heathen philosophy to Christianity. Augustine, indeed, had never been a heathen. He had imbibed Christian doctrine from his mother’s lips in infancy. When carried away to Manichæism he regarded it as a form of Christianity. He tells us that Neo-Platonism, with all its attractions for his intellect, failed to gain his adhesion, because the teaching of his childhood prevented him from adopting any religion which had not “the saving name of Christ” (“Conf.” v. 25) as its centre. But this reverence for Christ was little more than a sentiment; his beliefs were anything but those of a Christian. His profession had made it necessary for him to be well versed in the philosophies of his time, his intellectual character led him to feel all their attraction; the new Platonism—the ultimate form which the Platonic philosophy had assumed under the influence of Christianity—had a real hold upon

his reason and his taste. In these Conversations and Meditations at Cassiacum, in the interval between his conversion and his baptism, with powers stimulated by the mental crisis, he was reviewing the light which the ancient philosophy at its brightest could throw upon the great problems of Being and Life. Whether truth is attainable ; whether the apparent disorder of the world and of life is embraced and harmonized by a grand universal order ; what is the happiest mode of human life ; whether the soul is immortal ?

In reading his books on these subjects, we become aware of the genius of Augustine, and of the character of his genius. He is not a mere rhetorician dazzling us with brilliant phrases, or a sophist playing with philosophical puzzles ; he is a profound metaphysician, he is a thinker of the highest degree of originality, and depth, and logical vigour. Among those works already reviewed we have phrases which have become household words, thoughts which have formed the text of treatises, and have proved the germ of philosophical systems.¹

¹ In lib. ii. c. 1 of the "Soliloquies" we have the "*Noverim me noverim te*," God grant me to know Thee, and to know myself, which forms the text of Bossuet's "*Traité de la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même*." Again, in a fragment of the "Soliloquies :"—"*Reason*. You who wish to know yourself, do you know whether you exist? *Augustine*. I do.—*Reason*. Whence do you know it? *Aug*. I am ignorant of that.—*Reason*. Are you conscious of yourself as of a simple or compound being? *Aug*. I am ignorant of that.—*Reason*. Do you know whether you think? *Aug*. I do.—*Reason*. It is a truth, then, that you think? *Aug*. That is a truth." We have the "I think, therefore I am," which is the basis of the system of Descartes and of Locke.

After six months thus happily and profitably spent, the festival of Easter approached, which was then one of the great annual seasons for baptism, and Augustine and his friends returned to Milan. There does not appear to be any reason for thinking that Ambrose was at this time aware of the special importance of the conversion of the ex-Professor of Rhetoric, and there seems to have been no such special intercourse between the two great saints as we should have been disposed to expect. Augustine, we have seen, lamented that while at Milan he failed in his attempts to obtain private conference with the much-engaged bishop; we learn that the bishop advised the new convert to read Isaiah in preparation for his baptism, but that Augustine did not find in it what he needed at the time, and laid it aside in favour of those philosophical speculations which we have been reviewing.

Augustine, with his son Adeodatus and his friend Alypius, was baptized by Ambrose on Easter-eve, A.D. 387. The popular imagination, so apt to seize the poetry of great events and to embody it in legend, has not overlooked this event of Augustine's baptism by Ambrose. The legend runs that when the baptism was ended, the spirit of prophecy filled their hearts with a psalm of thanksgiving; Ambrose sang the first verse, Augustine the second, and so in alternate verses the noblest of the Church's Canticles, the "*Te Deum Laudamus*," sprang in inspired utterance from their lips.

Augustine, considering where he could best serve God, resolved to return to his native country; his mother and brother, his son, and Alypius accompanied him, with the addition of Evodius, a native of

Thagaste, who had resolved to dedicate himself to the service of God, and who now attached himself to Augustine. They travelled to Rome and thence to Ostia, the port of Rome, at the mouth of the Tiber, ready to embark for Carthage.

It was while resting there a few days that that last intercourse of the heart occurred between the mother and son which forms one of the most beautiful passages of the "Confessions." "The day now approaching whereon she was to depart this life (which day Thou well knewest we knew not), it came to pass, Thyself, as I believe, by Thy secret ways so ordering it, that she and I stood alone, leaning on a certain window which looked into the garden of the house where we now lay at Ostia ; where, removed from the din of men, we were recruiting from the fatigues of a long journey, for the voyage. We were discoursing then together, alone, very sweetly; and 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,' we were inquiring between ourselves in the presence of the Truth, which Thou art, of what sort the eternal life of the saints was to be, 'which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man.' . . . And when our discourse was brought to that point that the very highest delight of the earthly senses was, in respect of the sweetness of that life, not only not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention, we, raising up ourselves with a more glowing affection towards the 'Self-same,' did by degrees pass through all things bodily, even the very heavens, whence sun and moon and stars shine upon the earth ; yea, we were soaring higher yet by inward musing, and discourse, and

admiring of Thy works. . . . We were saying then : ' If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth and waters and air and heaven ; yea, the very soul hushed to herself, and by not thinking on self surmounting self ; hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, and tongues, and signs, since all these say, *We made not ourselves, but He made us that abideth for ever.* If then, having uttered this, they too should be hushed, and He alone speak, not by them but by Himself, that we may hear His word, not through any tongue of flesh, nor angel's voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude ; but might hear Him whom, in these things, we love ; might hear his very Self without these (as we two now strained ourselves, and in swift thought touched on that eternal Wisdom which abideth over all)—could this be continued on, and other discordant visions withdrawn—this one ravish, and absorb and wrap up its beholder amid these inward joys, so that life might for ever be like that one moment of understanding which now we sigh for, were not this to *enter into the Master's joy*? And when shall that be? When *we shall all rise again, though we shall not all be changed.*'

"Such things was I speaking, and even if not in this very manner and in these very words, yet, Lord, Thou knowest that on that day, when we were speaking of these things, and this world with all its delights became, as we spake, contemptible to us, my mother said : ' Son, for my own part, I have no further delight in anything in this life. What I do here any longer and to what end I am here, I know not, now that my hopes in this world are accomplished. One thing

there was for which I desired to linger for awhile in this life, that I might see thee a Catholic Christian before I died. My God hath done this for me more abundantly, since I now see thee withal despising earthly happiness, become His servant. What do I longer here?'"

Five days after she fell sick of a fever. When someone asked whether she were not afraid to leave her body so far from her own city, she replied: "Nothing is far to God, nor was it to be feared lest at the end of the world He should not recognize whence He were to raise me up." In truth, "she had ever been careful and anxious as to her place of burial, which she had provided and prepared for herself by the body of her husband;" but when another hoped she might yet live to die in her own land, she turned her eyes to Augustine and said, "Behold what he saith," and soon after: "Lay this body anywhere, let not care for that any way disquiet you; this only I request, that you would remember me at the Lord's altar wherever you be." "On the ninth day of her sickness, and the fifty-sixth year of her age, and the three-and-thirtieth of mine, was that religious and holy soul freed from the body." There is a touching natural simplicity in the record of "the wound wrought through the sudden wrench of that most sweet and dear custom of living together." "I joyed indeed in her testimony when in that her last sickness, mingling her endearments with my acts of duty; she called me 'dutiful,' and mentioned, with great affection of tone, that she never had heard any harsh or reproachful sound uttered by my mouth against her. But yet, O my God, who madest us, what comparison

is there betwixt that honour that I paid to her and her slavery for me ? ”

We learn something of the funeral customs of the time. Augustine closed his mother's eyes. “ The boy Adeodatus burst into a passion of weeping at his grandmother's death, but was checked by all the rest, for we thought it not fitting to solemnize that funeral with tearful laments and groanings, for thereby do they for the most part express grief for the departed as though unhappy or altogether dead ; whereas she was neither unhappy in her death nor altogether dead. Of this we were assured on good grounds, the testimony of her good conversation and faith unfeigned.” “ Then Evodius took up the Psalter and began to sing, our whole house answering him, the Psalm, *I will sing of mercy and judgment, to Thee, O Lord.* But hearing what we were doing, many brethren and religious women came together ; and whilst they (whose office it was) made ready for the burial as the manner is, I (in a part of the house where I might properly) together with those who thought not fit to leave me, discussed upon something fitting the time. . . . And behold the corpse was carried to the burial ; we went and returned without tears. For neither in those prayers which we poured forth unto Thee when the Sacrifice of our ransom was offered for her, when now the corpse was by the grave's side, as the manner there is, previous to its being laid therein, did I weep even during those prayers ; yet was I the whole day in secret heavily sad, and with troubled mind prayed Thee, as I could, to heal my sorrow.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE RECLUSE OF THAGASTE.

A Year in Rome—Returns to Africa—Lives the Ascetic Life with his Friends at Thagaste—Writes “On the Manners of the Catholics”—Biblical Studies—Various Writings—Death of Nebridius—Of Adeodatus.

How the death of Monica affected the plans of Augustine, or whether any other cause intervened to induce him to change them, we do not know ; all we know is that he did for the present abandon the design of returning to Africa, and instead retraced his steps, with Adeodatus and Evodius, to Rome. There they spent a year, of whose history Augustine nowhere gives us the slightest hint. He would have found himself appreciated in, and he would have appreciated, that ascetic Christian school in the high society of Rome, which Jerome¹ has made so well known to us ; but we are ignorant whether he found his way into it. From the time of his baptism Augustine had openly declared his special vocation by assuming the dark robe and leathern girdle which were the recognised habit of one who had adopted the ascetic life.

After a sojourn of nearly a year at Rome he at length set out again for Africa, where he arrived in the summer of the year 388. It was five years since

¹ See “The Fathers for English Readers : Jerome,” chap. iv.

he had stolen away from Carthage, leaving his mother watching and praying in the oratory of St. Cyprian. What changes had happened to him since then ; not so much external changes, from Rome to Milan and Milan to Rome, but what internal changes had come to pass in him, from Augustine the talented and ambitious rhetorician, a Manichæan, leading an irregular life, to Augustine the Christian and ascetic !

His plan was to seek some retreat near Thagaste where, with his friends, he might live a life of study and contemplation. After a short sojourn at Carthage, he accordingly proceeded to his native town, sold his little patrimony, and distributed part of it to the poor, keeping for himself a house in the environs, in which he lived in community with Adeodatus, Romanianus, Lucinianus, and some other disciples who put themselves under his guidance.

The history of Augustine is chiefly a history of his literary labours. His life at Thagaste was fruitful of two important works : one, "On the Manners of the Catholic Church and the Manners of the Manichæans ;" the other "On the Greatness of the Soul." The latter work, on the nature of the soul, the cause of its being, its aspirations, its powers, its aims, is an event in the history of philosophy ; it is one of the three or four works in which the philosophical genius of its author is most favourably displayed.

The Manichæans were at this time the most dangerous opponents of the Catholic faith, and Augustine had special reasons for undertaking the defence of the faith against them. It was the apparent severity of their morals which especially led people to sympathize with them, and it was to a comparison between the

life of the Manichæans and the Christian life as seen in the Catholic Church that Augustine addressed himself, as the first of a series of works against them, which occupied some subsequent years of his life.

In treating in this work of the morals of Christianity; Augustine takes the opportunity to give a very interesting sketch of the Christian Church and the Christian life of his time. He points out how love to God and love to man form the basis of Christian manners; how the Church, like a wise mother, trains her children by teachings and exercises proportioned to their strength and attainments. She reserves for children easy instructions and exercises; she assigns to grown men more elevated truths and exercises worthy of their strength; to the aged she gives the pure and serene illuminations of wisdom. She teaches to all the duties of their several callings; she prescribes to husbands gentle authority, and to wives chaste obedience, and places children under a kind of free-servitude, for in the family all authority is that of tenderness and gentleness; she holds brothers to be more closely allied by the bond of religion than by that of blood, and inspires with mutual kindness those who are connected by relationship, and adds the union of hearts to that of nature.

“The Catholic Church teaches servants to attach themselves to their masters, rather out of love of their duty than by the necessity of their condition; she teaches masters kindness to their servants, by keeping before their eyes that God is the common master of both. She does not limit herself to uniting the citizens of the same town, she unites the different nations, yea, all men on the face of the earth, not

only in the bonds of civil society, but in teaching them that they are all descended from one Father she teaches them that they are all brethren. She teaches kings to govern their people well, and people to obey their kings. By gathering nourishment from the bosom of the Church man grows in strength, and finds himself at last capable of following after God, and attaining to Him."

Then, in answer to the claims of the Manichæans to a special austerity of virtue, Augustine goes on to sketch the "Religious" of his time :—the tens of thousands of the faithful who, chiefly in the East and in Egypt, astonished the world by the spectacle of their perfection : the solitaries, hidden in the depths of the deserts, living on bread and water, passing their days in intercourse with God, in contemplating His supreme beauty with the eye of a purified intelligence, who are accused of being useless to mankind, as if their prayers did not draw down blessings upon the world, as if the example of their life were not mighty in inspiring men with the love of virtue. He goes on to describe those who, not so greatly surpassing the limits of ordinary human weakness, united in communities, live humble, gentle, tranquil lives, in chastity, in prayers, in reading, in spiritual conferences. None of them possesses anything, but the labour of their own hands affords them a quiet independence. As soon as one has finished any work he carries it to the dean, for the religious are divided into tens, and the chief of each ten is called its dean. The dean relieves the religious from all temporal cares ; he supplies them with all they need ; and the deans render account to the abbot or father. At the

end of the day each quits his cell to appear before the father. Several of these communities number 3,000 monks, and more. The father addresses all these religious gathered about him ; they listen in a wonderful silence, and the impression which his discourse makes upon them is only shown in sighs and tears ; or if his words excite some extraordinary emotion of holy joy, it is with so much reserve and so little noise that it is hardly to be perceived. After the exhortation they go to their meal, which is very simple and very frugal ; flesh and wine are not permitted. What is to spare of the produce of the work of the community is distributed to the poor : these religious work so diligently and spend so little, that they are often able to send ship-loads of food to places where there is exceptional distress. But, says Augustine, we have said enough of that which all the world knows. And he goes on to speak of the communities of women, chaste, temperate, and laborious. They spin and weave cloth to clothe themselves and their brethren, who in exchange for clothing furnish the nuns with food. It is not the young monks, but only the wisest and most trusted of the old men who carry these provisions, which they lay down at the gate of the monastery, and go no further. Should I undertake to praise such manners, such a life, such an order, such an institution, I could not do so worthily. He goes on to say, that the purity of manners and holiness of the Church are not confined within such narrow limits as the solitaries and religious communities. Among the bishops, the priests, the deacons, and the other

ministers to whom the dispensation of the holy mysteries is committed, their virtue is the more admirable, since it is more difficult to maintain it in intercourse with the world and the distractions of the life which they lead in it. They have not merely to guide people who are well, but to heal people who are sick. It is necessary even to bear with the vices of the people with much patience if one desires to get to the end of them ; before one is in a position to remedy an evil one is often obliged to tolerate it for a long time. But it is difficult for them to maintain in the midst of the distraction of human affairs tranquillity of mind, and any kind of regulated life. The solitaries are where they live well the bishops and priests are where they are only learning to live well."

Augustine passes on to the Cenobites who live in the cities. "I have seen," he says, "a great number of them at Milan ; they live a holy life in the same house under the guidance of a learned and pious priest. I have even seen at Rome many of these monasteries, of which each is governed by that one of the brethren who has the most wisdom and the most knowledge in the things of God. They submit themselves with exactitude and constancy to the rules of Christian charity, holiness, and liberty. These religious also are not chargeable to any one ; they live of the labour of their own hands, according to the custom of the Orientals, and the example of the Apostle St. Paul. I have been told that some of these religious carry the practice of fasting so far that it is almost incredible. The ordinary practice among them is to make only one meal a day, in the

evening ; but there are some who sometimes go three or four days without either eating or drinking. And it is not only men who live in this manner, but women also. Many widows and virgins dwell together, making linen and woollen stuffs, whose sale supplies all their wants. The most worthy and capable are at the head of the community. They are not only capable of regulating and forming the morals, but also of forming the intellects of the others. No one is obliged to austerities which they cannot bear ; nothing is imposed upon the unwilling ; no one is blamed by the rest for avowing that he is not able to do as much as they ; the charity so recommended by all our holy Scriptures is not forgotten among them. The greater number of these religious abstain from flesh and wine except when they are ill ; they accept this abstinence in a spirit of penitence, and do not condemn themselves to it out of superstitious notions, like the Manichæans, who regard flesh as unclean and wine as the gall of the powers of darkness."

It was the life of these Cenobites of the cities which Augustine imitated at Thagaste ; he himself was the learned and pious guide who formed not only the morals but the intellect of the little community.

Augustine passed about three years in this retreat at Thagaste, leading the ascetic life of fasting, prayer, and meditation, and forming the minds and morals of his little community. At this time he occupied himself with an edition of the Bible, which, indeed, he never published, but for which he collated the principal versions of the Bible, such as the Septuagint, the edition of Aquila, and the

recent translation of Jerome. His literary diligence also produced during these years a number of works. A book "On Music," one called "The Master"—the dialogue between himself and Adeodatus, already alluded to p. 77. A book "On Free Will," and another on "True Religion."

In this latter work he sets himself to display in all their brightness the excellence of the true religion and the duties which it enjoins. "Religion," he says, "is the only thing which can lead us to happiness. One cannot doubt that Christianity is the true religion. Plato even would have recognised it as such had he seen the most sublime doctrines of his philosophy preached throughout the world, embraced, and followed by multitudes of all conditions of life." After giving the characteristics which distinguish error from truth, false religion from the true, he indicates the foundations of the true religion, viz., history and prophecy; he runs through the principal doctrines of Christianity, and concludes with some interesting considerations on its morals, and exhorts all men to embrace and to follow the true religion.

Augustine was the last great writer of the Church who was called upon to combat the expiring classical heathenism; and it is interesting to see how far that heathenism had been modified in the hands of its professors under the influence of Christian ideas before it finally succumbed to those ideas. It was during this sojourn at Thagaste that Augustine had a correspondence with Maximus, a grammarian (professor of *Belles Lettres*) at Madaura, and it is thus that the philosopher states his own belief. "Yes," he says, "the forum of Madaura is filled with statues

of the gods ; and I approve of this custom ; but do not suppose that there is anyone so foolish as not to understand that there is only one supreme God, who has neither origin nor descent, the sole and almighty creator of the whole of Nature. We adore, under the names of various deities, His powers spread throughout the universe to preserve and uphold, for we are all ignorant of the true name which belongs to Him ; and it is thus that in offering a different homage to different attributes of the divinity, man arrives at adoring Him in His entirety.”¹

During this period Nebridius, the early friend of Augustine, died, not in the house of Augustine, but on his own estate, in the neighbourhood of Carthage. There is an affectionate correspondence between them. Nebridius gently reproaches his friend that he does not make some arrangement for their being together. Augustine points out the impossibility. “ Shall he send a carriage to bring him to Thagaste ? But Nebridius is sick, and his mother, who was unwilling to part with him in health, would be still less willing in the state of suffering in which he now is. Should Augustine go to him ? But he has companions in his retreat whom he cannot bring with him, and whom he believes it his duty not to part from. Nebridius is capable of conversing usefully with himself, Augustine’s young companions are not. Should he come and go, and spend his time sometimes with him and sometimes with them ? But that would not be to live together or to live according to their plans. From Thagaste to the home of Nebridius is not a mere drive, it is a journey, and in these continual

¹ Letter 16.

journeys there would be neither repose nor leisure. Besides, Augustine is ill and suffering ; he cannot do all he would wish, and resigns himself not to wish what he cannot do. All these cares of going and coming do not belong to those who are thinking of that last journey which is called death, the only journey which deserves to occupy the mind of man. There are, indeed, privileged persons who, in the confusion of travel, preserve the peace and calm of their heart, and who, amid confusions, do not lose sight of their latter end. But Augustine finds it difficult to familiarize himself with death in the midst of the bustle of affairs. He needs a profound retreat, and an entire separation from noise.

Nebridius is delighted with the letters of Augustine ; it is a startling saying, but we recognise it as characteristic of the phase of thought with which we have been already made familiar, and we recognise a certain amount of truth there is in it, when he tells him, "Your letters speak to my ears like Christ, like Plato, like Plotinus." Nebridius died a Christian shortly afterwards. Augustine says of him in the "Confessions," "Whatever that be which is signified by the bosom of Abraham,¹ there lives my Nebridius, my sweet friend, and Thy child, O Lord, there he liveth ; for what other place is there for such a soul ? "

Towards the end of this period Augustine suffered a loss which must have touched him still more nearly, in the death of his son Adeodatus, of whose talents and virtues he has left the records which we have already quoted.²

¹ "Conf." IX. 6.

² *Infra*, p. 77.

CHAPTER XII.

AUGUSTINE ORDAINED PRIEST AT HIPPO.

Revolt of Firmus ; of Gildo—Description of Hippo—Augustine visits it—Ordained Priest—Founds a Religious House at Hippo—Controversy with the Manichæans—With the Donatists—Consecrated Coadjutor Bishop.

THE African provinces had usually followed the fortunes of the Western Empire. In the revolt of the powerful Moorish family of which Firmus was the head, which was suppressed by the Count Theodosius (father of the great emperor of that name), the apparent fidelity of his brother Gildo had obtained as his reward the immense patrimony which the treason of Firmus had forfeited : long and meritorious service in the armies of Rome had raised him to the dignity of a military count ; the narrow policy of the court of Theodosius had adopted the mischievous expedient of supporting the interests of the Emperor in Africa, by making this powerful family the representative of the Imperial authority ; and Gildo was nominated to succeed Firmus in the chief command of the military force of Africa. His ambition soon usurped also the administration of justice and of the finances, without account and without control. While nominally acting as the representative of the emperor, he virtually ruled with

absolute authority for twelve years, from A.D. 386 to 398. During those twelve years he oppressed the provinces of Africa with his tyrannies, exactions, his cruelties, and his lusts. In the civil war between Theodosius and Eugenius, the Count of Africa maintained a haughty neutrality, refused to assist either of the contending parties with troops or vessels, and when fortune declared in favour of Theodosius, offered him the profession of a hollow allegiance. The death of Theodosius and the discord between his sons confirmed the power of the Moor. But when Stilicho, the great companion-in-arms of Theodosius, and guardian of the young Honorius, began to give tokens that he would not suffer Gildo's usurped power in Africa to continue unchallenged, Gildo offered to transfer his allegiance to Arcadius, and so to annex the African provinces to the Eastern Empire. In 398 the forces of Rome under command of Mascezel, the younger brother of Gildo, obtained an almost bloodless victory over the African forces, and the tyranny of Gildo came to an end.

That which concerns us in this episode of the usurpation of Gildo is, that the usurper was supported by the Donatists of Africa, while the Catholics, though they offered no resistance to his power, were known to be unfavourable to it. The fury of the tyrant was therefore directed against the orthodox party, who suffered indignities and oppression at his hands.

It was in the second year of Gildo's usurpation that Augustine came to Africa, it was in his fifth year that we resume the narrative in this chapter.

The city of Constantine was the chief city of the

province of Numidia ; Hippo was only a small city of the same province, and Thagaste was a little, inconsiderable town ; but the situation of Hippo as a seaport and its fortifications gave it a certain importance. It was situated on the east side of a bold promontory, formed by the mountain of Papua, a spur of the Atlas range which here projects into the Great Sea. Its principal buildings were a basilica, baths, and a fortified palace situated on one of the two low hills which lay within its enclosure. Two rivers washed its walls. The more considerable—the Sebus—flowing past its eastern face, had its bed artificially deepened to a depth of 25 feet, so as to form an internal port ; the remains of a Roman quay may still be seen along its left bank. Its seaport has shared the fate of that of Carthage, in being filled up with sand. On the opposite bank, the discovery of funereal urns shows how far the necropolis of the little city extended. The plains on the north of the city were dominated by the lofty mountain of Papua, whose lower slopes are yet clothed with a forest of magnificent chestnut-trees, and whose severe peaks contrast with the fertile meadows and harvests, the fig-trees and vines, which clothe the plain. The aqueduct still remains which conveyed water from the mountain to the city, and the cisterns in which it was stored. The modern town of Bona is built out of the ruins of the ancient Hippo. Its population consisted of various and discordant elements. The Donatist schismatics, here as in many other towns of Africa, were the most numerous and dominant party ; there were a large number of Manichæans, and some Arians ;

there was a strong pagan element ; there was a considerable proportion of Jews ; and the Catholic Church had no easy position among all these opponents. The Bishop Valerius was a man of earnest piety, but he was a Greek by birth ; and it was a disadvantage to himself and his cause that he was not able to preach fluently in Latin.

Some important person in the service of the State at Hippo had shown a disposition to embrace the Catholic faith, and even to adopt the religious life, and having heard of the reputation of the learned theologian and ascetic of Thagaste, had expressed a desire to confer with him on these subjects. Augustine's zeal led him to comply with his wishes. Arrived at Hippo, he was present in the church—the Basilica of Peace—at the very time that Bishop Valerius was preaching to the people, and insisting upon the necessity of their giving a new priest to the service of the Catholic Church of the city.

At this time it was a wide-spread practice in the Church to force ordination and consecration upon men who in the judgment of the Church were well qualified to be priests and bishops, in spite of their unwillingness. The theory which underlies this strange practice was, that the men who were most fit for it were the most likely to shrink from the responsibilities of the sacred ministry, and therefore it was thought right to regard their unwillingness as only another proof of fitness, and to use a holy violence in forcing the office upon them. This was so common a custom that for some time past Augustine had avoided any place where the see was vacant, lest his growing

reputation should lead to his having the office of bishop thus thrust upon him.

While Valerius was speaking about the need of another priest, some who recognised Augustine made known that he was present ; the people laid hold of him, and at once presented him to the bishop for ordination. Augustine made what opposition he could, but without avail ; and he was thus by surprise ordained a priest of the Church of Hippo. He thus towards the end of the year 390 commenced the ministry here, which as priest and bishop extended over the subsequent forty years.

Valerius was not ignorant of the value of his young priest, and made full use of his talents for the benefit of his church. It was then the custom in the churches of Africa for the bishop only to preach, but Valerius had the courage to break through this custom, in spite of murmurs, in favour of Augustine, and made him habitually preach. The effect of his eloquence was such as fully to justify the innovation, and to spread the new fashion, so that in a short time it became common to see priests in the pulpits of the African churches. It was not only in the pulpit that the talents of Augustine were made useful, the aged bishop was glad to entrust to him almost the entire administration of the diocese.

The little community at Thagaste thus suddenly deprived of its head was not broken up. After his ordination, Augustine had probably returned to it for the brief retreat which he asked of his bishop in order to prepare himself for the office which, though he had received it unwillingly, he had accepted as provi-

dentially laid upon him, and set himself with all his heart and powers to fulfil its sacred duties. Doubtless he had then made some temporary arrangement for its continuance ; but he very soon established a similar monastery in the gardens adjoining the church of Hippo : there his friends Alypius and Evodius rejoined him, and new disciples, Severus, Possidius, and others, gathered round him ; and he again resumed, so far as his duties as a priest permitted, the life which he had originally chosen. When he succeeded to the see, Augustine turned his episcopal house into a kind of monastery, in which he lived in common with his clergy. These were not establishments of mere recluses, but, with Augustine to form the minds and morals of their inmates, they came to serve the purpose of a “theological college” for the diocese, and even for neighbouring dioceses ; for the fame of the learning and holiness of these establishments spread far and wide, and from all parts demands were continually made upon Augustine for his disciples to be ordained as priests. Ten of them ultimately became bishops, and all of them were judged worthy of the title of saint. Among them are some names well known to us : Alypius became bishop of Thagaste, Evodius of Usala ; Possidius, one of the first to join the community at Hippo, became bishop of Calamus, and is one of the two contemporary biographers of Augustine ; Severus, bishop of Milevis ; Profuturus, of Cirta, succeeded by Fortunatus ; Urban, of Sicca ; Boniface, and Peregrinus ; the name of the tenth bishop who proceeded from the community is unknown to us. The monastery at

Hippo after a time became insufficient for the numbers who desired to enter it, and, although the city was not a very considerable one, several other such religious houses were opened in it.

The bishops of other dioceses, seeing the good fruits of the monastery of Hippo, established similar communities in their dioceses, so that the number of such houses multiplied rapidly; the wealthy giving freely of their wealth to aid in their foundation. Augustine also founded a similar house for women; several of his relations entered it, and his sister was for a long time its head. Augustine seldom visited it; he made it a rule to be exceedingly guarded in his relations with women; but his influence gave a tone to the life of this monastery of women; his authority was needed sometimes to allay dissensions; and he taught them by means of letters which have come down to us. At the conclusion of one of these letters¹ he sketches a Rule, whose principles are community of life, humility, obedience, and prayer.

We have already said that there were many Manichæans at Hippo, they were numerous throughout Africa, and at the moment were the most successful of the opponents of the Catholic faith. Augustine entered into the controversy with all his brilliant powers. He challenged one of their most famous doctors, a priest named Fortunatus, to a public discussion. It was held in the hall of the principal baths of the city, the Baths of Sœsius, and Fortunatus was so completely worsted in the argument in

¹ Ep. cix.

the face of friends and foes, that he quitted the city never to return. Augustine also wrote at this time two books against them, "On the Utility of the Faith," and "On the Two Souls." In the year 393, on the advice of Augustine, a General Council of all the African churches assembled at Hippo, in the Basilica of Peace, under the presidency of Aurelius, bishop of Carthage. The reputation of Augustine was by this time so great and so universal, that though only a priest he was, contrary to all precedent, invited by the council to pronounce a discourse before it. He preached "on the Faith and the Creed," treating the subject with special reference to the prevalent Manichæan errors. This council, in consequence of some irregularity which had occurred through ignorance, made a canon that the Bishop of Carthage should annually notify to the African bishops the right time for the observance of the following Easter, a notification which he himself received, according to ancient custom formally ratified by the Council of Nicæa, from the Bishop of Alexandria; and also that a General Council of the African Churches should be held annually at Carthage or at some other city, and that all the bishops should attend in person or by representation. This was the beginning of a series of "plenary" councils of the African Churches, whose deliberations and decisions we shall find exercised a considerable influence throughout the Church.

It was not only against the Manichæans that Augustine waged a ceaseless war, but also against the Donatists, the rival sect, which, holding the same faith but differing on some questions of discipline,

divided the Christians of Africa into two hostile parties, and thus enfeebled the cause of the true faith in the presence of its numerous opponents.

The sect had existed now for years ; in many places it embraced a majority of the Christian inhabitants. Many must have been born and grown up in it, and accepted it as the true Church, without having ever inquired into the history of the schism and the grounds of its justification. It only needed that their serious attention should be gained to the consideration of the historical facts and the obvious arguments to win back many of them to the Catholic Church. Augustine was eminently qualified for the work. His reputation attracted Donatists as well as Catholics to his preaching ; and once under the influence of his dialectical skill and his winning eloquence it is not to be wondered at that he won many over to the ranks of the Church. He was indefatigable in his endeavours, in public addresses and private conversations, by writing books against them and replying to their books. He wrote letters to each of their bishops and to the most considerable of their party to beg them to return within the pale of the Catholic Church, or at least to enter into communication on the subject of their division with the doctors of the Church. Finding his letters ineffectual, he sought opportunities of making a personal appeal to them, and besought them, "in the name of God, let us together seek for the truth." "Take care," they replied, "of your own. You have your flock, and we have ours, leave ours alone as we leave yours alone." "Here," replied Augustine, "is

your flock, and here is ours, but where is that which Jesus Christ purchased with His blood?" But the chiefs of the Donatists refused to enter into conference with him, and even tried to prevent their writings from falling into his hands, since that gave him the opportunity of publishing crushing replies. But they preached openly that Augustine was not to be considered as a man of holy life, but as a wolf who ravaged the flock, and that whoever killed him would obtain of God remission of his sins as the reward of his good deed. What made Augustine assail the schism of the Donatists with greater pertinacity than any other of the sects which were separated from the Church, was the fear that Catholics should think this schism a matter of small importance, and that people should be encouraged to continue in it.

The reputation of Augustine increased day by day, and the good old bishop and the Catholics of Hippo feared lest some day he should be called to fill some vacant see and they should lose the invaluable advantage of his services and great talents. The Bishop, moreover, was growing less and less capable of discharging the duties of the Episcopate. Valerius therefore proposed that Augustine should be at once consecrated bishop-coadjutor and should succeed him at Hippo. Megalus, bishop of Calamus, the primate of Numidia, alone raised a voice against the proposal, on the ground of some calumnious reports against Augustine, but on inquiry into those reports he was convinced of their falsity, and consented himself to act as the chief of the consecrating bishops.

Augustine was consecrated bishop at the close of the year 395. Within a few months Valerius departed to his rest, and Augustine, at the age of forty-one, commenced the episcopate, which for five-and-thirty years he exercised indeed at Hippo, but for the advantage of the whole Church, not only of that but of all succeeding ages.

The long episcopate of Augustine has little of external incident to mark the efflux of its five-and-thirty years; indeed, from his conversion to his death there is little of incident in his life; and the few incidents made little real difference to his life. His writings are the real work of his life, and it is very probable that we should have had the "Confessions" and "Soliloquies," the work—"On the Trinity" and "The City of God," all the same if he had continued to live the life of a recluse in his retreat at Thagaste.

Much of the literary work of Augustine was controversial. We have more than once alluded to the manifold divisions of society in Africa, and the bitterness of their mutual animosities. It was natural to one of Augustine's philosophical interest in all phases of human opinion that he should seek to comprehend in all their breadth and fathom to their depths all these various systems. It was inevitable that one so skilled in the use of all the weapons of controversy should take a certain pleasure in the conflict and the victory. He recognised it as a duty to God and his Church to use the powers which God had given him in the defence of the truth.

Three great controversies extend over almost the

whole of his Christian life : against the Manichæans, against the Donatists, and against the Pelagians. The parties which then loomed so large, and seemed to threaten the faith or divide the unity of the Church, have been dead a thousand years ; but some of the principles which underlay these parties lie in human nature, and reappear from time to time. Wild speculations about the origin of the universe exercise the mind of this generation, and form the special attraction against which the Church has to contend in this nineteenth century, just as Manichæanism did in the fourth. A Puritan dissatisfaction with the laxity of Church discipline has given rise in England to a formidable and long-standing sectarian rivalry with the Church, which now among us, as then in Africa, is the greatest cause of the weakness of our Christianity in the face of infidelity and vice. An unconscious trust in the force of human will, and tacit disbelief in the necessity of God's grace, probably go towards forming that sturdy self-reliance and dislike of religious sentiment which are strongly characteristic of our English temper. In fine, the English society of the present day is not so very unlike that of Africa in the time of Augustine in the multiplicity of its religious divisions. God grant that our "unhappy divisions" lead not in our case, as in theirs, to the same conclusion. The Church of North Africa is the only great division of the ancient Church of God which has entirely ceased to exist, and that utter ruin is to be plainly traced to its internal dissensions and mutual antagonisms.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXPIRING PAGANISM.

Madaura—Calamus—The Pagan Riots at Calamus—Correspondence with the People of Madaura—With Dioscorus—With Longinianus.

THE ancient paganism still lingered, not only in the country districts but in some of the towns. The town of Madaura, to whose school the boy Augustine was sent, we have already learnt, was a town where the majority of the inhabitants were still pagan, and where the statues of the ancient gods still uninjured adorned the forum. Calamus, one of the most important towns of Numidia, was another in which the pagan element was still numerous. Considerable ruins of this town, now called Ghelma, about sixty miles south of Hippo, still remain, with its basilica, its theatre, and its outer wall in fair preservation.

A law of Honorius, of the year 407, Nov. 24, had forbidden the celebration of the pagan solemnities, but when the 1st of June arrived in the following year the pagan inhabitants of Calamus defied the law, and celebrated their solemn festival, which was, perhaps, that of Flora. Not content with this assertion of their own religion, the spirit of antagonism to the rival religion, whose legal supremacy they thus protested against, broke out in some acts of outrage and

violence against the Christians of the town. The troops of dancers, celebrating their solemnities, passed in insulting procession before the doors of the church. The clergy, having endeavoured to prevent the insult, were assailed with stones, as were all the Christian congregation. A week after, the Bishop of Calamus took an opportunity to remind the assembled citizens of the Imperial law, though no one indeed was ignorant of it ; and again the mob assailed the church with showers of stones. Two days afterwards the magistrates of the town refused an audience to the clergy who demanded that their complaints should be put on record in the public acts. The same day a heavy hailstorm fell upon the city. The pagans attributed the unwonted visitation to the Christians, and in revenge assailed them with stones for the third time ; moreover, they set fire to the church and the houses of the priests, and one of the priests was killed. The bishop was only saved by concealing himself in a recess whence he could hear the cries of those who sought to kill him. This riot was allowed to proceed from ten in the morning till night was far advanced without any attempt on the part of the authorities of the city to put a stop to the disorder. A stranger of some authority or influence interposed to save some of the clergy from the hands of the mob, and to rescue some of the things which had been plundered. Augustine visited the town to console the sufferers, and was entreated by the chief pagan inhabitants of the town to interpose his good offices to save them from the punishment to which the riotous conduct of the mob and the connivance

of the magistrates had rendered the whole town liable. We have also one of two letters written by Nectarius, asking his intercession for the offenders, and drawing a pitiful picture of a town whose citizens are dragged to execution. Augustine replies, a little warmly, that he does not understand what Nectarius means by his picture ; Augustine is not aware that any such fate threatens Calamus. But he asks Nectarius if he does not think it right that the pagans who pillage Catholics, and kill them, and burn their houses, should be restrained by fear of punishment ; which just punishment, he intimates, he declines to take any steps to avert.

Another illustration of the attitude of the expiring paganism towards Christianity, of a very different kind, but equally interesting in its way, is supplied by several series of correspondence between Augustine and some pagan contemporaries. The inhabitants of Madaura having to write to Augustine on some matter of business addressed him as "Father," and wished him "health in the Lord." "Our most honoured lord," they said, "may God and his Christ give you in the midst of your clergy a long and happy life." Augustine says in consequence of these expressions he has made inquiries of the bearer of their letter and found that Madaura has not changed. But in that case they are only playing with the name of Christ. He takes advantage of these expressions to call their serious attention to Christianity. He calls their attention to various prophecies of the Scriptures which have been fulfilled ; to the dispersion of the Jews over all the world and the

cessation of the kingdom among them ; to the immense progress of the doctrine of Christ which arose among the Jews,—these are the evidences which he invites them to consider. He points out to them the fate of the idols and their temples : no one dreams of raising again the temples which have fallen into ruin ; some are closed, with no one to care for them ; others have been diverted to other uses. The idols are broken, burnt, or buried. The powers which persecuted the Christians in the name of the false gods have been vanquished, not by the arms of the followers of Christ, but by their patient courage under the axe of the executioner. The sovereign majesty is turned against the idols and kneels at the tomb of a fisherman. No prophecy has proved vain : the Last Judgment has been foretold ; that will be fulfilled also. There is no longer an excuse for not going to Christ when everything proclaims His glory. The name of Christ is in the mouths of all men who desire to fulfil a duty or to rise to a virtue. He defines God and His Word, explains the Incarnation, and declares all there is which is so marvellously powerful in the Incarnation of God. In conclusion, he says to the citizens of Madaura that he should not have spoken to them of Jesus Christ, if they had not spoken of Him in their letter. He entreats them to abandon error, and in return for their addressing him as father, he says that he regards them not only as brethren but as fathers, in memory of the instruction with which Madaura had nourished his youthful intelligence. Another similar opportunity was given him by Dioscorus, a learned pagan, the

Emperor's remembrancer, who wrote to Augustine, on his ancient renown as a rhetorician, to consult him on some passages of Cicero. The bishop excuses himself courteously from discussing Cicero, but asks his correspondent's consideration of what he ventures to put before him on the subject of Christianity. Dioscorus, we learn, in the end became a Christian.

Three letters also remain of a correspondence between Augustine and Longinianus, who was perhaps a grammarian at Madaura. Augustine, who had had some relations with him, and believed him to be a man sincerely desirous of knowing the truth and acting rightly, was the first to write, asking him what he thought of Christ, and whether he was of opinion that it was possible to attain the happy life by the way of Christianity ; and, if so, by that way only ? If Longinianus does not walk in that way, is it in consequence of some doubt, or of mere delay ?

Longinianus, in reply, addresses him as his very venerable lord and very holy father ; he regards it as a happiness of which he is quite unworthy, to have received a letter from this great and good man ; it is like a ray of his virtues which has come to shine upon his own face. Augustine has imposed a great burden in putting such questions to a man of his belief, especially at such a time. Longinianus professes to follow a teaching rich in moral precepts, which he declares to be more ancient than Socrates, more ancient than the books of the Jews, the glory of which he attributes to Orpheus, to Ages, to Trismegistus, mediators in old time between the gods and the world, in the beginning of the ages, before

Europe, Asia, and Africa had a name. This was the language of neo-platonism. But his vague philosophic faith does not hinder his respect for Augustine. He can see nothing in all the ages comparable with the bishop of Hippo—at least if one does not accept as historical the ideal portrait (of Socrates) drawn by Xenophon. He swears that he has seen nothing, read nothing, which approaches the bishop for his profound and constant labour for God, and for his purity of heart and firmness of belief. Augustine asks him by what way one may attain to God: it is for the bishop rather to teach him. Longinianus does not pretend yet to possess all which is necessary to raise a man towards the throne of the eternal good, but he is engaged in laying up provisions for the journey. “You wish me,” he says, “to tell you what according to my views is the way which leads most surely to God. Hear, then, that which our fathers have taught me: piety and justice, purity and innocence, truth in word and deed, perseverance in spite of the instability of human affairs, the protecting aid of the gods, the support of the divine powers, or rather of the powers of the sole and universal God, incomprehensible and ineffable, those powers which you call angels, the solemn rites of the ancient sacrifices, and the salutary expiations which purify the souls and bodies of mortals,—this, according to the teaching of our ancestors, this is the safe road which leads man to God. As for Christ, this God formed of flesh and spirit, who is the God of your belief, by whom you believe yourself certain to attain to the supreme, blessed, and true Creator, the Father of all,

I neither can nor dare tell you all I think of Him." Longinianus ends by saying that his sole merit is in his respect for Augustine. To this Augustine gives an admirable reply, "Without grace human virtue is not able to lead us to God, nor are pious practices able to lead us to virtue. Virtue, no doubt, is of more value than sacrifices and expiations, but it can do nothing without grace. The grace of God comes first as the cause of all good ; then human virtue flowing from the grace of God ; lastly, the religious practices which assist virtue, but do not take its place : these are the methods, and these only, which, in their union, are able to lead man to God." We need not continue the correspondence. We have only cited it as an illustration of the attitude of the latest generation of cultured paganism towards the Christianity before which it was vanishing out of existence.

CHAPTER XIV.

AUGUSTINE'S RELATIONS WITH ILLUSTRIOUS
CONTEMPORARIES.

Contemporary great Churchmen—Correspondence with Simplicianus—Paulinus of Nola—Licentius—Jerome.

ONE of the most remarkable features of the age of which we are writing is that it includes so many of the greatest names among the great fathers of the Church. Antony, the father of the ascetic life (died A.D. 356), Athanasius (died 373), Basil (died 380), Gregory of Nazianzum (died 390), Ambrose (died 397), Chrysostom (died 401), Jerome (died 420), Augustine (died 430), and others of lesser note were contemporaries, or nearly so. The admirable postal arrangements of the Roman Empire made travelling easy and safe throughout its vast extent, and communication by letter conveyed by friends was not infrequent. All the great men of this period with whom we are acquainted maintained a large correspondence with all parts of the Empire, and their letters are always a most interesting and important part of their writings. Of the letters of Augustine one hundred and fifty have come down to us, beginning with the time of his retreat at Cassiacum and extending to the last years of his life, addressed to correspondents in almost all parts of Christendom.

One feature of this intercommunication, which is of special interest, is the intercourse which the great Churchmen of the time maintained with one another. The question of the circulation or the publication of their books falls into the same category. For the books of a great writer were multiplied by scribes, and sent by him to personal friends and illustrious contemporaries, while friends and contemporaries often wrote to beg for copies of new works from the great authors.

We shall find it interesting to note a few examples of the communications of Augustine with his contemporaries.

We have already seen that, though Augustine was for some years a resident at Milan and its immediate neighbourhood, and though Ambrose was his spiritual father, yet the personal intercourse between them was small. Ambrose seems not to have recognised the genius, and could not foresee the future eminence of the young rhetoric professor, who attended his sermons and who at last sought baptism at his hands. And in after-life, when Augustine had become famous, there seems to have been little intercourse between them. On the death of Ambrose (A.D. 397¹) he was succeeded by the good old Simplician, who had been Ambrose's spiritual father, and who, we have seen, had also been useful to Augustine in the throes of his own conversion.¹ He at once wrote to Augustine, and spoke in high terms of Augustine's works; and suggested several subjects for his consideration. These questions of Simplician are the origin of a

¹ See p. 64, *infra*.

treatise in two chapters,¹ which deal with some of the deepest questions of theology.

Another of the correspondents of Augustine, Paulinus of Nola, a great name in his day, may need some words of introduction to our readers. Born at Bordeaux, in 353, of a senatorial house, of great ability, and highly cultured, he rose to the first dignities of the Empire. Himself the possessor of a rich patrimony, he married Therasia, one of the richest heiresses of Spain. At the age of forty, with the concurrence of his wife, he renounced the enjoyment of wealth and honour, of society and literature; retired to Spain, and lived a life of voluntary poverty; disposing gradually of all his wealth, and distributing it in works of piety and charity. It is said that he gave the first example of that heroism of charity which was afterwards exhibited by St. Vincent de Paul, in giving himself up as a slave in order to effect the release of the son of a poor widow, since he had nothing else wherewith to ransom him. The people of Barcelona, where he lived, forced the priesthood upon him, after the fashion of which we have seen one, and shall see some other examples, in spite of his unwillingness. "Not," he says, "that I had a distaste for the office, but because I did not desire to establish myself at Barcelona." In effect in the following year he went into Italy, where he made the friendship of Ambrose, and finally settled in a country-house in the environs of Nola. He had a special devotion

· "De Diversis Quæstionibus ad Simplicianum."

to St. Felix, whose tomb was at Nola ; the popular devotion had already surrounded the tomb with five large churches ; Paulinus added a sixth of still greater architectural beauty, and decorated it with pictures of subjects from the Old and New Testaments, and on every anniversary of the Saint's festival, being a poet of some skill, he produced a hymn in his honour. Besides works in verse and prose, he has left a considerable correspondence, and his writings justify the reputation he had among his contemporaries. Long after the date at which we introduce him to the reader, the people of Nola forced the bishopric of the place upon him. But at the time of which we are writing the ex-consul was a simple ascetic.

Alypius, who was acquainted with him, sent him copies of some of the works of Augustine. Paulinus thereupon wrote to Augustine, expressing his admiration of the works which had reached him ; asking for his other works ; and proposing some questions to him on points which had occupied his own thoughts.

This correspondence between Augustine and Paulinus brings forward again one of the minor characters of the history in whom we have learned to take some interest. The young Licentius the son of Romanianus, Augustine's former pupil, one of the little group of students at Cassiacum, had written to his old master. He was now in Italy, and was not living satisfactorily. He had continued to cultivate his love of versification, and his letter to Augustine was in verse, in which, in the midst of classical conceits were some verses of a more

natural tone of thought, in which he expresses fond recollections of the days passed at Cassiacum, and regrets his absence from his master. Augustine writes an affectionate letter of good counsel to Licentius, and begs him to go and see Paulinus of Nola. This he encloses in one to his father Romanianus; and at the same time encloses one to Paulinus in which he asks two proofs of his friendship: first, that he will give him a faithful criticism of his books, acting the part of the righteous in smiting him friendly, and reproving him, and not of the wicked, who break the head with the precious balm of flattery; secondly he commends Licentius, whom he calls his son, to the kindness of Paulinus. In the following year we find Paulinus writing a letter to Romanianus, and adding an address, half in prose, half in verse, to Licentius, in which he urges him to listen to the voice of Augustine, and to give himself to God. We learn that in the end Licentius fulfilled the dearest wishes of these two great saints on his behalf.

The relations of Augustine with Jerome have a considerable interest and some theological importance. The contrast between these two great men—the two greatest Churchmen of their age—heightens the interest of their relations. The aged scholar, once the secretary of the Bishop of Rome, the leader of the ascetic party which had sprung up among the ladies of the great Roman houses, a candidate for the see of Rome, had now been settled for many years in the cell of his monastery beside the grotto of Bethlehem. He was the greatest scholar of the

age, from his cell had proceeded those careful recensions of the texts of the sacred books, those invaluable translations, those learned commentaries, which have been of inestimable advantage to the whole Western Church from that day to this. Age, which had ripened his scholarship and increased his reputation, had not tamed his fiery temper or taken the edge off his bitter pen.

The youthful priest, and presently bishop, of Hippo, was rapidly rising into a reputation, not inferior to that of Jerome, but based on different qualities. Augustine was the profoundest Christian metaphysician of that or perhaps any subsequent age ; of a temper the opposite of Jerome's, kindly and sensitive ; as skilful in the weapons of controversy as Jerome, but his opposite in tone ; courteous and polished ; always seeking to persuade and win, rather than, like Jerome, to refute and overwhelm.

This comparison between them is suggested by the fact that the relations between them for many years were those of controversy. Some details of this famous discussion have been given in the life of Jerome ¹ in the series of which the present is another volume ; we need, therefore, here give no more than the slightest sketch of it, with such special incidents or extracts as will illustrate the character of Augustine.

In his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians Jerome had explained the scene between Peter and Paul at Antioch, when Paul rebuked Peter to his face for having taken part with the Judaizing

¹ "The Fathers for English Readers : Jerome," chap. xxiv.

Christians (Gal. ii. 11-14), on the theory that the scene had been preconcerted between the Apostles, and that the pretended rebuke of Paul and submission of Peter was, in fact, a pious fraud. At the beginning of the year 395 Augustine, then a priest at Hippo, of the age of 41, wrote for the first time to the illustrious solitary of Bethlehem, then of the age of 64. He had lately received news of him by Alypius, who had returned from a visit to the Holy Land. He tells him that he knows him through his works as well as he knows any man in the world; what he does not know of him is the least important part of him, his person; and that even in this respect Alypius's description has put him as it were living before his eyes. He begs him to oblige the Christian students of Africa by giving them a Latin translation of the Greek versions of the Holy Scriptures. Lastly, he speaks of his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. It appears to him dangerous to admit that the inspired authors used deceit in any particular, as opening the door to the most disastrous assaults upon the faith; and begs Jerome's serious reconsideration of the question.

This letter was entrusted to Profuturus, who was about to travel to the Holy Land; he was also the bearer of some of Augustine's works, which he sends for Jerome's acceptance, begging him—as he had begged Paulinus—to give him his impartial criticisms, citing to him also the text of the Psalms: "The righteous shall reprove me and correct me with mercy, but the oil of the wicked shall not touch my head;" he confesses that he is always a bad judge of

his own works, sometimes through too much want of self-confidence, sometimes through too much self-satisfaction. Unfortunately, just as Profuturus was about to set out, he was forced to accept the see of Constantine, and the books and letters of Augustine failed to find their way to Bethlehem.

Two years later Augustine, now bishop, received a brief note from Jerome, introducing some traveller to his good offices, and took the opportunity to write again. His letter is full of terms of respect and affection; but he returns again to the question on which he had written already. He insists upon the grave consequences of admitting that falsehood enters, though only in one point, into the divine books. He does not desire to add his mite to the treasure of Jerome's erudition, but he suggests that nothing can be more proper than that Jerome should himself correct the statement which has escaped him in this place of his commentary, and invites him to sing his Palinode, since the beauty of Christian truth is greater than that of the Grecian Helen. This letter was entrusted to a priest named Paul for conveyance. But, by great ill fortune, this letter also was not carried to its destination. Neither of the two letters, however, were lost, they were handed about with other writings of Augustine; were copied, and got into general circulation; and only in this way, after long delay, came indirectly to the knowledge of Jerome.

At length, after no less than seven years had elapsed, viz., in 402, a traveller from the Holy Land informed Augustine that it was the talk of the monasteries of Bethlehem that he had attacked

Jerome in a book, which he had not sent to him, and that he was seeking to increase his own reputation by attacking that of Jerome without giving him the opportunity to reply. Augustine immediately wrote again to Jerome, disclaiming the writing of such a book and the being actuated by such intentions.

Jerome then at length replied. It was not a book in which he was charged with having attacked him, but a letter; in which he thought he recognised the style of Augustine; but since it did not bear his signature, and had only come into his hands indirectly, he had hesitated to conclude that it was his, lest he should do him an injustice. He begs to be excused entering into a controversy with Augustine; he pleads that he is an old man, who, in his day did what he could; now it is the turn of Augustine. But, in return for Augustine's poetical allusion, he will give him another in the story of Dares and Entellus, and remind him of the vulgar proverb, "The tired ox treads the more heavily." He sends him his reply to part of the attack of Rufinus, with whom he was carrying on a war of bitter words, and concludes with some expressions of good will.

In reply, Augustine disarms the anger of Jerome by expressions of regret, and submission, and affection, which Jerome, who had also warm affections, could not resist. Jerome thereupon enters seriously into the discussion of the subject to which Augustine had invited him; and the correspondence was carried on at considerable length and extended over several years. We need not enter more fully into it. We need only note one or two characteristic passages.

Jerome begins by saying that, if Augustine had read his preface to the Epistle to the Galatians a little more attentively, he would have seen that the opinion expressed by Jerome was simply that of Origen and the other Greek theologians, and that he had left his readers at liberty to approve or reject the opinion of the Greeks. The object of Origen's interpretation was to refute the blasphemies of Porphyry, who had brought it as an accusation against Christianity that its two chief Apostles had thus disagreed about it. He asks Augustine to produce his authorities in support of his opinion. Thus Jerome throughout reposes on the great names he cites on the side of the interpretation which he has espoused. He says, with a little sneer at the youthful bishop his antagonist, that it is the duty of a bishop like him to make his opinions known throughout the universe, and to engage all other bishops to adopt them. As for me, he says, hidden under a lowly roof with a few monks, that is to say, a few sinners like myself, I dare not pronounce on such great questions. I content myself with avowing ingenuously that I read the books of the ancients, and according to the custom of all commentators I note the different explanations, that every one may take that which pleases him. Jerome is unconscious that he is exhibiting his weakness as well as his strength. His strength is his scholarship, his knowledge of what all the ancients have said ; his weakness is this very reliance on the ancients and the want of an independent judgment on the merits of the case. He is unconscious that, while taunting Augustine with his weak point, his ignorance of the Greek theologians,

he has failed to recognise the original and profound thought and sound judgment which make Augustine as great an authority as any of the "ancients." Augustine remarks with dignity that the books of holy Scripture are the only books whose infallibility he recognises, and that he holds all other writings to be subject to critical examination. It is an interesting passage on the light in which the holy Scriptures were then universally regarded. In another similar passage Jerome compares Augustine and himself with mock humility :—Augustine, he says, is still young ; he is placed in the pontifical chair, let him instruct the peoples, let him enrich the Roman granaries with new African harvests ; it is enough for the poor Jerome to whisper in a corner of a monastery to some sinner like himself who listens to him or reads to him. Another interesting passage is on the abrogation of the ceremonial law. Jerome had charged Augustine with teaching that Jewish Christians were bound to continue to observe their ancient law. He replies : Paul and other Christians of the purest faith, indeed, countenanced the ancient ceremonies by sometimes observing them, for fear that observances of a prophetic significance, observed by the piety of the fathers, should be detested by their descendants as sacrilegious. But since the coming of the faith these precepts had lost their vitality. It was necessary to carry them like dead bodies to the sepulchre ; not in dissimulation but in reverence ; and not to abandon them all at once to the calumnies of enemies, as it were to the teeth of dogs. If now, he adds, some Christian, though Jew by birth, would celebrate these

ceremonies, this would not be any longer to give them a pious funeral and to carry them to the grave ; it would be to disinter their quiet ashes, and impiously violate the sanctity of the tomb. Jerome's last letter has not come down to us, but there is some reason to believe that the arguments of Augustine had on mature consideration had their effect upon him, for Augustine, writing in 416 to Oceanus, one of the Roman friends of Jerome, cites the work of Jerome against Pelagius, published under the name of " Critobulus," where the recluse of Bethlehem judges that all bishops are open to blame " since St. Paul found something to blame even in St. Peter."

CHAPTER XV.

THE FUGITIVES FROM ROME.

The Siege and Sack of Rome—Fugitives from Rome to Africa—Conduct of Count Heraclian—Proba and her Daughters—Demetrius—Pinianus and Melania—The attempt to force the Priesthood upon Pinianus at Hippo.

IN the last year of the fourth century the barbarians, who had so long been the great danger of the Empire, began the series of assaults which overwhelmed the Empire of the West. Alaric, king of the Goths, invaded Italy in the years 400 to 403. In 404 Honorius sought a safer residence than Milan behind the marshes and fortifications of Ravenna. In 406 the Germans invaded Italy under Rhadagaisus, and overran Gaul. In 407 the British army revolted under the usurper Constantine. In 408 Alaric besieged Rome, but accepted a vast ransom as the price of its safety. In 409 he again marched upon Rome, and set up a puppet emperor in the person of Attalus.

Attalus sent officers and troops to take possession of the African provinces, but the Count Heraclian defeated them; sent a large sum of money to Ravenna; by which the fidelity of the imperial guards was secured; and withheld the usual supplies of corn, which introduced famine and tumult into Rome, and embarrassed the Gothic conqueror. Alaric was dis-

posed to come to terms with Honorius ; but, on the rejection of his overtures, he marched for the third time upon Rome, and the world heard with amazement and horror that the Eternal City had been sacked by the barbarians.

While the provinces of the West were thus desolated, those of Africa escaped the general ruin. Great numbers of the noblest and wealthiest of the inhabitants of Rome and of Italy, fleeing before the barbarians, sought an asylum in Africa. We blush for our kind as we read that the fugitives, landing here and there on the coasts of Africa, were frequently treated with no more hospitality than that which a stranded ship used to receive at the hands of Cornish wreckers. And it was not only the rough inhabitants of the coasts who thus made gain of the ruin of their countrymen ; the Count Heraclian sold his protection dear to the wealthier fugitives ; and is even accused of having sold Italian maidens who had lost their protectors—some of them of the noblest Roman houses—to Syrian merchants, to be disposed of in the harems of the East. “The most illustrious of these fugitives was the noble and pious Proba, the widow of the prefect Petronius. After the death of her husband, the most powerful subject of Rome, she had remained at the head of the Anician family, and successively supplied from her private fortune the expenses of the consulship of her three sons. When the city was besieged and taken by the Goths, Proba supported with Christian resignation the loss of immense riches, embarked in a small vessel from whence she beheld at sea the flames of her burning palace, and fled with

her daughter Læta, and her grand-daughter, the celebrated virgin Demetrias,¹ to the coast of Africa. The benevolent profusion with which the matron distributed the fruits, or the price, of her estates contributed to alleviate the misfortunes of exile and captivity. But even the family of Proba herself was not exempt from the rapacious oppression of Count Heraclian."² On the other hand, some of the fugitives are accused of abandoning themselves to an extravagant and vicious gaiety, with a thoughtless frivolity which amazed the bystanders ; these Romans escaped from the wreck of Rome plunged into the vicious pleasures of Carthage, and filled its theatres with their cries of delight. It would seem that every great public calamity loosens the customary restraints of a conventional morality, and leads the vicious to make haste to put in practice the Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Augustine endeavoured to interpose, with little effect, on behalf of some of the oppressed fugitives ; he sought with better success to teach some of them Christian resignation.

¹ A few years later Demetrias became very famous. On the eve of the day appointed for her marriage "this foremost maiden of the Roman world for nobility and wealth,"—so Jerome describes her—declared her resolution to embrace the life of a Church Virgin. She received the veil in the chief church of Carthage at the hands of the Bishop Aurelius. A multitude of other young ladies, and a crowd of dependants and servants followed this illustrious example ; and the affair made a great noise. "All the churches throughout Africa rejoiced," says Jerome. Augustine and Alypius, Jerome, and Pelagius, wrote to her congratulations and counsels.

² Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," chap. xxxi.

One of his letters¹ is addressed to the Lady Proba on the subject of Prayer, and is one of the most beautiful of his letters.

Among other fugitives from Rome were Albina, with her daughter and son-in-law, Pinianus and Melania.

The readers of Church history will remember how in the early part of the history of Jerome¹ we become acquainted with the Lady Melania, a young widow of high rank and great wealth, who had abandoned her position in the first society of Rome; left her son to the care of guardians; made the pilgrimage of the Holy Land and the Thebaid with Rufinus, the Church historian, for her guide; and finally built two monasteries at Jerusalem, one for men presided over by Rufinus, the other for women under her own care. He will remember how her grand-daughter and namesake, Melania, in spite of her grandmother's endeavours to win her over to an ascetic life, was happily married to Pinianus, the son of Severus, the Prefect of Rome.

Pinianus and Melania, with Albina, fleeing, like so many others of the great families of Rome, from the face of the invading barbarians, sought refuge in Africa. They came to Thagaste, where they built and endowed two monasteries, one for twenty-four men, the other for three hundred women, and otherwise made large benefactions to the Church. From Thagaste they came to Hippo to visit Augustine, where their high rank and wealth, their fervent

¹ Letter cxxx.

² "Fathers for English Readers : Jerome," p. 28 and p. 115.

piety and munificence, made them remarkable personages. While they were attending the divine service at Hippo the people recognised them, and all at once a cry was raised nominating Pinianus as a priest, and demanding his immediate ordination.

We ought not to be surprised that a custom bad in itself should fall into worse abuses, but we are shocked to learn that the custom of forcing ordination or consecration upon unwilling persons had fallen into such abuse that covetousness sometimes led a Church thus to compel wealthy persons to enter into its ministry, because it was also the custom for a priest or bishop to bestow his wealth, or great part of it, upon his Church. In this case we are told it was not so much the distinguished piety of Pinianus as his well-known wealth which made the people of Hippo so desirous to secure for themselves both him and it. It is to be regretted that the conduct of Augustine is not free from blame in the matter. At first, indeed, he descended from his throne behind the altar, and went down to the nave to the people, and declared to them that he would not ordain Pinianus without his own consent, and that, if they found some means of getting Pinianus for their priest, in spite of his opposition, they should no longer have Augustine as their bishop. After these words he returned to his seat, and the multitude was for a moment silenced. But presently they renewed their clamours, adding, that if Augustine refused to ordain Pinianus some other bishop would. Augustine told those who were about him that he had given Pinianus a promise not to ordain him without his consent ; that he was master in his own Church ;

and that no bishop had the right to ordain a priest in the Church of Hippo without his authorisation. The people, who did not hear this explanation, continued their cries. They accused Alypius, the bishop of Thagaste, who was present, of having interfered to prevent Pinianus from being made priest at Hippo in order to keep him for himself at Thagaste. Augustine would have retired, but so great was the excitement of the crowd that he feared they might proceed to some act of violence, and he remained, in order that his presence might be some check upon them. Then a monk came forward and announced to the people that Pinianus declared through him that if they persisted in ordaining him against his will he would immediately quit Africa. Augustine spoke to Pinianus and obtained from him a promise that he would remain at Hippo if they did not force the ministry upon him. He announced this to the people, who, however, were not satisfied with it. They demanded that he should promise, if he should ever enter into the priesthood, to do so in the Church of Hippo. Pinianus consented. Then came the question of the terms of the oath in which Pinianus was to confirm these promises. He wished to make some exceptions to the promise never to quit Hippo ; for example, in case of invasion by the barbarians. Augustine represented that to anticipate such an event would seem to the people like the presage of calamity ; that in such an event every one would quit Hippo, and his oath would not be binding ; and thought it better to say nothing on the subject. Then Melania suggested that in the case of a pestilence

they ought to be at liberty to leave the city ; but Pinianus himself objected to this condition. It was finally agreed to add to the oath to stay at Hippo the general words "except in case of need," although Augustine foresaw that the words would probably appear to the people a mere evasion, depriving the promise of all value.

In effect, when one of the deacons in a loud voice recited the oath which Pinianus proposed to take, so soon as they heard the saving clause with which it concluded, the storm burst out anew. At length, Pinianus consented to take the oath without any saving clause, and solemnly repeated the words. The people responded, "Blessed be God," and required him to sign the promise, and he signed it. Some then demanded that Augustine and Alypius should also sign the document, and Augustine was in the act of doing so when Melania interfered and objected, and the signature remained incomplete.

These facts are indicated in a letter¹ to Albina, the mother of Melania, in which Augustine explained the transaction and defended his own conduct. The family of Pinianus believed that the people of Hippo had been influenced by an infamous cupidity, and blamed Augustine for having suggested the oath. Augustine explains that the oath had been taken in his presence, but not at his instigation. He defends his people from the charge of cupidity, since he says they would not have shared in the treasures with which it might have pleased Pinianus to enrich the

¹ Letter cxxvi.

Church of Hippo. It was not the money of Pinianus but his contempt of money which had touched the people. But, if the people of Hippo would not have benefited by the treasures of Pinianus, then he says the accusation of cupidity must fall on the clergy, and chiefly on the bishop. To these suspicions Augustine pleads the disinterestedness of his own soul, fully known to God only. Instead of complaining of the wrong these suspicions do him, he is only concerned to heal the heart of Albina, which has allowed itself to be poisoned with these injurious thoughts. He takes God to witness that the administration of the goods of the Church which falls upon him he regards as a heavy burden from which he would gladly be freed. He takes God to witness that he believes Alypius is influenced by the same sentiments, and that he does not deserve the charges which the people of Hippo brought against him. Albina had very pertinently demanded of Augustine whether he believed that an oath obtained by force was obligatory. Augustine had already dealt with this question authoritatively in a letter¹ to Alypius; he repeats to Albina that a Christian, even in the presence of certain death, ought not to take the name of his God and Saviour to witness to a lie. The Christians of Hippo, he says, do not pretend to keep Pinianus in a state of slavery; he is at liberty to go and come according to his needs, provided that at each departure it is his intention to return to Hippo. Moreover, his oath was offered voluntarily, it was not obtained by force; if a man so

¹ Letter cxxv.

considerable as Pinianus should repudiate his oath, his example would be a great encouragement to perjury. For himself it was not his duty to prevent Pinianus from taking the oath, it was not for him to allow his Church to be turned upside down rather than accept what a worthy man offered him.

In judging Augustine's conduct in the transaction we must bear in mind the received opinions and habits of the time. Basil the Great had not scrupled to force the episcopate of Nazianzum on his dearest friend Gregory. Augustine himself had suffered a similar compulsion. He clearly did not think that any wrong would have been done to Pinianus if he had been forced into the sacred ministry on this occasion. But, after making every allowance, we conclude by sharing Albina's common-sense view of the transaction ; Augustine's defence exhibits too much of his old skill as an advocate, and is nothing but ingenious special pleading ; and his declaring that he will not complain of the wrong her suspicions do him, but is only concerned that she should indulge such wicked thoughts, is not in good taste.

We rejoice, however, that there is reason to believe that common sense obtained the upper hand at last ; and that Pinianus was virtually released from the obligation of his extorted oath ; for we find that Pinianus and Melania returned to Thagaste, where, with Albina, they spent seven years of a severely ascetic life, and that they subsequently went to Jerusalem, and died there.

CHAPTER XVI.

DONATISM.

Distraction of the African Churches—Want of Discipline among Donatists—Acts of Violence against Catholics : against Possidius, Restitutus, Maximian—Escape of Augustine—Penal Laws against Donatists.

It is difficult without entering into some detail to give an idea of the confusion caused throughout the African provinces by the bitter animosity between the Catholics and Donatists.

At the time when Augustine succeeded to the episcopate of Hippo the schism extended over the whole of the African provinces, and the schismatics exceeded the Catholics in numbers. Not only in every town were there rival bishops and Churches, but the peace of families was broken up by discords. Husband and wife worshipped at different altars, parents and children, masters and servants, belonged to rival Churches.

The schism, according to the eternal nature of schisms, had subdivided ; there were four parties among the Donatists — the Claudianists, the Primianists, the Maximianists, and the Rogatists ; they agreed only in their common hatred of the Catholics.

Political feeling, as is almost inevitably the case,

had become mixed up with the religious partisanship. The orthodox Emperors, from Constantine downwards, had given recognition and imperial favours to the Catholics, and had from time to time discouraged the Donatists and other schismatical bodies by penal legislation. The result was, that while the Catholics were confirmed in their loyalty to the Emperors, the sects were always disaffected, and ready to throw their influence on the side of any opposition to or revolt against the imperial authority.

By the time of Augustine half a century of mutual wrongs had accumulated, and embittered the quarrel. Constans, after trying conciliation in vain, had ordered the Donatist congregations to be dispersed by force. At Sciliba the congregation resisted, and many of them were slain by the soldiers. Honoratus their bishop, was among the slain; he was reckoned as a martyr by his co-religionists, and an annual commemoration of his martyrdom afforded an annual provocation to inflammatory addresses and party riots, and kept alive in the memory of the Donatists this early act of imperial persecution. When Firmus, the Moor, revolted, the Donatists espoused his cause, and the Catholics were persecuted. When Theodosius¹ had restored order, the Donatists were punished as rebels. When Gildo, again, assumed an independent authority the same thing occurred, the Donatists supported his usurpation, and he gratified them by inflicting indignities and cruelties upon their religious rivals; and when Gildo was defeated the Catholics

¹ The father of the Emperor Theodosius.

were again taken under the imperial protection and the Donatists were regarded with disfavour.

Augustine, we have seen, as soon as he came in contact with the Donatists at Hippo, set himself with great earnestness and zeal to oppose them. But his zeal against their schism was accompanied by charity towards themselves. His object was not merely to gain a victory over opponents, but to win them over, and so heal the breach in the body of the Church ; and, while he employed all the resources of his polemical skill and eloquence against their cause, he advocated and practised a tone of personal courtesy and a policy of conciliation. A Council was held at Hippo in 393 under the influence of Augustine at which canons were passed to facilitate the return of Donatists into the Church. It was the first of the series of important Councils of the whole African Church already alluded to, eighteen in number, extending from the year 393 to 419, in which many important questions of Church doctrine and discipline were discussed and regulated by canons which were subsequently accepted by the whole Church.

This policy of conciliation was not unsuccessful, many were won over from the more moderate of the opponents ; but this not unnaturally inflamed the hostility of the rest. Augustine gives us examples of some of the grievances of which the Church had to complain. His earnest endeavours to persuade the Donatist bishops not to receive those who left the Catholics in disgrace, and his refusal to receive Donatists under such circumstances, shows the usual effect of the existence of rival Churches in the destruction of

discipline in them all. He gives us one illustration of it.¹ A young man, a Catholic, had been guilty of cruelly treating and beating his aged mother, and threatening to kill her; and his offence was exaggerated by its having been committed in the holy days, when even the punishment of criminals is suspended, out of respect for the holy season.² His bishop had re-proved him for it; and in spite he went over to the Donatists; and presently there he was to be seen in their church, clad in the white robe of the catechumen, and receiving baptism a second time.

Of the acts of violence attempted or committed by the Donatists against the Catholics Augustine gives several examples. Possidius, the disciple of Augustine who had succeeded Megalus in the see of Calamus, was going to a town in his diocese, when an armed party of Donatists headed by one of their priests, Crispinus, who was, moreover, a relation of Possidius, lay in wait in order to kill him. The bishop, being warned of it took another road, and sought refuge in a place called Livet. But the Donatists followed him thither, and attacked the house where he was. They assailed it with stones, they tried to force the door; they were proceeding to set fire to the house, when the inhabitants interfered, for fear of a general conflagration. At length they succeeded in forcing the doors; they pillaged the house, maltreated the people in it, carried off Possidius, and inflicted all sorts of outrages upon him; they would have killed him, had not Crispus, seeing the number of witnesses

¹ Letter xxxiv. to Eusebius.

² By a law of Gratian.

who were looking on, and who threatened them with the vengeance of the magistrates, restrained them. They left him on the ground covered with wounds and bathed in blood. The affair was brought before the magistrates, but the Donatists by their intrigues procured the acquittal of the accused. When the Emperor Honorius was informed of the sentence he condemned the Donatists and the judges who had acquitted them to pay each a fine of ten pounds of gold.

A priest of the diocese of Hippo, named Restitutus, formerly a Donatist, had been convinced of his error, and had embraced the Catholic faith. In revenge the Circumcellions took him by force from his house, carried him off in broad daylight to a neighbouring castle; there, in the sight of numerous spectators who did not dare to interfere, they stripped him, beat him with a stick, and when he fainted rolled him in the mud, covered him with a matting, and, having exposed him for a long time in this condition to the mockery of some and the pity of others, they carried him off to one of their churches, where they kept him twelve days a prisoner, until the magistrate of the province, being informed of it, sent and released him. The offenders were punished for this act of violence; but some years later this same priest, having again fallen into an ambushade of the Circumcellions, was put to death by them. The murderers were arrested and brought before Marcellinus at Carthage, when Augustine charitably wrote to intercede on their behalf. In the course of his letter he alludes to another outrage, in which they had put out the

eye and cut off the finger of another priest called Innocent.

Maximian, the Catholic bishop of Bagai, enforced by law the restitution of a church which the Donatists had taken from the Catholics. In revenge the Donatists one day entered his city and his church at the time that he was conducting the divine service. They broke the altar and struck him with the fragments. They stripped off his vestments, dragged him along the pavement of the church, and tortured him for a long time. At last they carried him to the top of a tower, and flung him from its summit. They believed him to be dead, and left him. But he had fallen upon a hillock of sand, where he was found insensible by some beggars, who in hope of reward carried him into the city, where he was restored to life and health.

Augustine himself, who had frequent occasion to travel about the country, was often in danger from the Circumcellions. Once he fell into their hands, and was beaten by them. Another time, when they had waylaid him with the intention of doing him some violence, he and his party lost their way, and so escaped the ambushade.

In consequence of these and similar outrages, the Council assembled at Carthage in the year 404 thought it right to appeal to the Emperor for special measures of protection against this new outburst of violence. A law of Theodosius had condemned schismatic bishops and priests to pay a fine of ten pounds of gold; the Council asked that this law might be applied to Donatists in all places where Catholics had suffered

violence or damage at the hands of the Circumcellions. Another law deprived heretics of the right of giving or receiving property by gift or inheritance; the Council proposed that this should be enforced in the case of Donatists who persisted in their schism. Lastly, a third law made cities and the proprietors of estates responsible for all violences which the Circumcellions should commit against Catholics within their limits.

Whilst the deputies of the Council carried these requests to Honorius, complaints were also sent to the imperial court from many places of the violences of the Donatists. Maximian, the bishop of Bagai above-mentioned, on his recovery from the violence which he had suffered, went to Italy to demand in person justice and protection. He found there, not only the deputies of the Council of Carthage, but a crowd of others who had come to lay at the foot of the throne complaints similar to his.

Honorius was moved by these proofs of the confusion and violence which existed in Africa, and passed severe edicts against heretics. He declared that he desired altogether to exterminate the heresy of the Donatists, and with this view he ordered that all their property should be sequestered till they joined the Catholic Church; he confiscated their churches; enfranchised those of their slaves who were willing to become Catholics; interdicted their assemblies under pain of beating; and more than granted all the demands of the Council of Carthage.

These severe laws contributed to multiply conversions. Many of those who had been born and brought

up in the sect but did not hold its tenets by personal conviction, saved themselves from these penalties by at least a feigned conversion ; many who had secretly been convinced, but who feared the violence of the Circumcellions, now came over. Whole populations¹ came over, and the new converts displayed a zeal greater even than that of the Catholics themselves. On the other hand, those who were left behind were enraged. The Circumcellions roamed from place to place, attacking by night the houses of Catholics, pillaging their goods and ill-treating their persons, and blinding the ecclesiastics by putting chalk and vinegar into their eyes. But these excesses disgusted moderate men, and did not serve the cause for which they were employed.

The dispute between the Catholics and the Donatists, it is necessary to bear in mind, was almost entirely confined to the African provinces. In all the rest of Christendom there was no doubt which was the Church and which was the schism. And thus it was sometimes possible for Christians of well-known character or special influence, who were outside the arena of contention, to interpose with effect. One instance of this will have a special interest for those who are acquainted with the history of Jerome and his friends. Pammachius, the quondam fellow-student and ancient friend of Jerome, who had married Paulina, the third daughter of the famous lady Paula, had, like many of the wealthy nobles of Rome, great estates in Africa. He wrote to the farmers and

¹ Letters xlviii., lxxx.

labourers on his African estates, explaining the merits of the question between the Donatists and the Church, with the result that those of them who were Donatists abandoned the schism and entered the Catholic pale. One of Augustine's letters is addressed to Pammachius on this occasion, congratulating him on the course he had taken, and on its success, and expressing regret that his good example was not more frequently followed.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CONFERENCE AT CARTHAGE.

The Emperor orders a Conference between Catholics and Donatists—Letter of the Catholic Bishops—Report of the Proceedings—Decision against the Donatists—Laws requiring them to conform—Many conform, the rest embittered—The question of “Toleration”—Revolt of Count Heraclian—He invades Italy; Defeat, and Death—Death of Marcellinus.

It was ten weeks after the fall and sack of Rome that an edict was issued from Ravenna, ordering a last great attempt to settle the religious divisions of Africa—which constituted also a political danger—by means of a solemn conference between the contending parties, and nominating Marcellinus as the representative of the emperor to preside over the Conference. A reference to the precedent set by Constantine in the case of the councils of his reign, and followed by the subsequent emperors, will show that the duties of the Imperial officer were limited to securing the full freedom and good order of the deliberations. Marcellinus was clearly appointed to this duty as the head of the administration of justice in the provinces of Africa at the time; but no better President of the Council could have been appointed, since he was a man of the highest character and an earnest Christian.

This was the fulfilment of the desires of the Catholic party. Again and again had Augustine, confident in the truth of his cause, invited the chiefs of the Donatists to a public conference ; again and again had they, fearing his dialectic skill and eloquence, declined the encounter. But on a recent occasion, when one of the chiefs of the Donatists was brought before the tribunal of the civil magistrate, he had declared that if opportunity were given them, they could establish their claims by argument. They could not therefore now decline the Imperial summons to a conference ; and both sides prepared to put forth their utmost strength.

The conduct of the Catholic prelates on the occasion calls forth our highest admiration. They sincerely desired not a triumph over their enemies which the Imperial policy assured them, but a reconciliation which should heal the wounds from which the Church and the State alike were suffering. They put forth a manifesto, drawn up by Augustine, in which the spirit of charity sought beforehand to propitiate the other side. The Catholic bishops declared beforehand that if the Donatists should be able to prove that the true Church was to be found only in their body, they were prepared to resign their sees, and to enter into their body as simple laymen. They declared that if, on the other hand, they should be able to convince the Donatists, they were willing to recognise their bishops and clergy ; that in the towns where there were two rival bishops, they should rule together during their joint lifetime, and the survivor should retain the see ; or where the

people were unwilling to have such a double episcopate both should resign, and a new election take place. "Why," says the letter of the bishops, "should we not make to our Redeemer this sacrifice of humility? He came down from heaven to take a body and to make us its members, and should we hesitate to descend from our seats in order to put an end to the evils which tear His body and divide His members? It is enough for us to be faithful and obedient Christians. We were ordained bishops for the advantage of the people of Jesus Christ, and we will resign the episcopate if this sacrifice can contribute to restore peace among Christians."

The Conference was summoned for May 18, 411. Both sides mustered in great strength. The Catholic bishops came to the city one by one without any public demonstration; they numbered 286. The Donatist bishops, to the number of 278, entered the city in grand procession. A hundred and twenty Catholic bishops were kept away by sickness or old age, and 64 sees were vacant. The Donatists also claimed that many of their bishops were absent, and that their total number exceeded those of the Catholics. If these figures be correct, they give us more than 900 bishops in the provinces of Africa. Allowing for the fact that many towns had two rival bishops, it is still evident that not only every town, but many places of lesser importance must have been episcopal sees.

On June 1 the Conference was formally opened in the Baths of Gargilius, in the centre of the city, in a hall of vast size, well lighted, and agreeably cool even in the heat of an African June.

It was impossible for all the 564 bishops actually present to attempt to take a personal part in the discussion without hopeless confusion. At the suggestion of Marcellinus, the president, eighteen were chosen on each side,—seven to act as advocates, seven others to aid them with documents or suggestions, four others to watch over the correctness of the notaries, who were to make a full and exact report of the proceedings. Of the seven advocates on the Catholic side, the majority are already known to us; they were Augustine, Aurelius, Alypius, Possidius, Vincentius, Fortunatus, and Fortunatianus. The seven Donatist advocates were, Petilianus of Carthage, Emeritus of Cæsarea, Fortunius of Tubursis, Primitus, Prothasius, Montanus, Gaudentius, and Adeodatus.

The Donatists showed from the beginning a want of confidence in their cause, and a want of charity towards their opponents, in striking contrast with the sentiments published in the letter of the Catholic bishops. They interposed delays, and tried to carry the discussion away from the main points at issue. After the formal opening of the first session, and the putting in in writing by both sides of a definition of the matters in question, the rest of the session was wasted in chicaneries. In the second session nothing of importance was done, the Donatists asking time to examine at leisure the proceedings of the first session, and to prepare themselves better for the discussion. At the opening of the third session (after a delay of five days), the Donatists indicated very unmistakably the feelings which had occupied their

hearts. When the president desired the bishops to be seated, Petilian refused, on the ground that Scripture forbade them to sit down among the wicked ; the eighteen Catholic bishops thought it courteous not to sit while their eighteen antagonists were standing ; and, finally, Marcellinus, out of respect for the bishops, declined to sit down ; and so the discussion was conducted standing.

The whole discussion, with the exception of some formal matters, was left by the Catholics in the hands of Augustine. He conducted it with admirable knowledge, prescience, and patient firmness, in language terse and clear. The principal orator on the Donatist side was Petilian, formerly an advocate, who, it was said, had been recently raised to the Episcopate with a view to his undertaking the championship of the Donatist cause on this occasion.

The reader will, perhaps, the better understand the proceedings of the Conference if we premise clearly, that besides the questions of fact between the Catholics and Donatists relating to the traditorship of Felix of Aptunga and the consecration of Cæcilian, there were also questions of doctrine involved of more permanent interest. Both sides claimed to be the Catholic Church. The Donatists held that the validity of the ministerial acts of a minister of the Church depended upon his personal holiness ; therefore they held that Cæcilian, consecrated by a traditor, was not validly consecrated. They also held that holiness was an essential characteristic of the true Church ; they laid down the principle of the mutual moral responsibility of men in the same

communion; they asserted the culpability of Cæcilian, and inferred that the African Catholics, continuing in the communion of Cæcilian, were implicated in his fault, and had fallen from their place in the Church of God.

When Petilian tried to fasten upon Augustine an admission that he was a son of Cæcilian, Augustine replied, "It is written we have one Father who is not of this world. Why do you ask me about Cæcilian? If he was innocent, I rejoice; if he was guilty, what then? he was like a straw floating in the air, like the goats feeding in the same pasture with the sheep, like the fish in the net: we are not to refuse to breathe the air because of the straws in it, we are not to break the divine nets and by schismatic hatreds to drag them to shore before the time." Augustine insisted on this obvious truth, that our Lord declared that the Church upon earth would always contain good and bad; and pressed home the argument that the Donatists themselves, in their treatment of the Maximianists, had insisted upon this principle. Then the Donatists entangled in this inconsistency cried out that one case did not prejudice another case, or one person another person.¹ Augustine seized at once upon the important admission. The reply he said is brief, but it is clear and exact in favour of the Catholics. It followed that the culpability of Cæcilian, if he were culpable, did not implicate the Church. But the question of Cæcilian's culpability was carefully examined. The original documents bearing upon

¹ *Nec causa causæ, nec persona personæ præjudicat.*

the question were adduced ; the formal declaration of his innocence by the synods at Rome and Arles, and by the Emperor Constantine ; the declaration of the innocence of Felix of Aptunga.

The decision of Marcellinus, like all the previous judicial decisions, was against the Donatists. He declared the innocence of Felix of Aptunga and of Cæcilian of Carthage. Then, in accordance with the Imperial instructions, he ordered that the churches should be given up to the Catholics, and forbade the religious assemblies of the Donatists. For the present the Donatist bishops were allowed to return without molestation to their cities, that they might take steps to obey the law. Those who had troops of Circumcellions in their territories, or on their estates, were bidden to do all in their power to restrain them on pain of the confiscation of the estates ; for it was necessary that the mad outrages of these fanatics should be suppressed, as well in the interest of the public peace as of the Catholic faith. Marcellinus declared, in conclusion, that an examination of the Acts of the Council would afford a complete demonstration that the Donatists had been in the wrong. The Catholic bishops took wise and energetic measures for profiting by this conclusion of the Conference. Augustine himself drew up a careful abridgement of the Acts of the Council, and the bishops circulated thousands of copies of it, that the facts and arguments might be made known to all Catholics and Donatists throughout Africa. It was in the year 311 that sixty-six bishops at Carthage had elected Majorinus as a rival bishop to Cæcilian, and com-

menced the schism ; it was in 411 that 278 Donatist bishops were condemned at Carthage ; the schism had filled Africa with confusion for a century. And even now it was not ended.

Great numbers, however, now for the first time fully informed of the real history of the schism, abandoned the Donatists and united themselves with the Church. Augustine continued his efforts. He wrote several letters and treatises on the subject. He attended a council of bishops at Cirta, in which the Donatists were in a majority, and spoke with such effect that nearly all the Donatists of Cirta were converted. In his own diocese, also, he had the happiness before his death to see nearly all the Christian inhabitants reconciled to the Church. But still the schism, which had the traditions of a century behind it, and which had its roots in the natural character of the people, could not be eradicated. When local circumstances relaxed the repressive hand of the civil power it was always ready to spring into action. It did not disappear until Christianity itself disappeared from North Africa before the conquering sword of the Saracen.

It is not to be disguised that Augustine, the most courteous of controversialists, in practice the most gentle of adversaries, always ready to advocate the policy of conciliation, and to believe in the power of truth, maintained in principle the right, and in some cases the duty and policy, of coercion ; of true toleration, had he lived in these times, he might have been the advocate ; but of that attitude of philosophic neutrality in presence of heresy or schism, too often miscalled toleration, he would have been the earnest

and able opponent. He would have pointed out that this attitude of neutrality is not the mere toleration of wrong on the part of right, it is indifference between right and wrong. He would, after his manner, have gone down to the bottom of the question, and have shown that this indifferentism is based upon the assumption that no man has a right to take for granted that it is he who possesses the truth ; it is based upon the assumption that the truth cannot be certainly ascertained ; he would have pointed out that this is the very agnosticism which he contended against in his work, "Against the Academicians." He would, perhaps, with eloquent indignation, have declared, that when men give themselves so little trouble to ascertain what is the truth, it is not to be wondered at that they should fail to ascertain it ; and that it is only in accordance with the natural pride of intellect that they should fall back upon the theory that it cannot be ascertained.

It is of curious and painful interest to see how the natural history of schism in all its usual features is illustrated in the history of the Church in Africa. Its rise, not on any question of the faith, but on a point of discipline ; its self-righteous spirit in narrowing the terms of communion ; its arrogance in unchurching the whole Christian body outside its own narrow sect. It is instructive to see the inevitable Nemesis of schism follow, when itself is broken up on the same grounds on which it first broke up the unity of the Church ; and finds itself using against the new sect the very arguments which it refused to listen to when originally addressed to itself ; when the very strictness of dis-

cipline which was the original justification of the schism is lost in the readiness to offer a refuge to those whom a righteous discipline, or the fear of it, has driven from the Church ; when it makes alliance with schismatics and heretics whose principles it abhors, on the ground of their common opposition to the Church ; when, refused recognition by the State, it declaims against the mingling of politics with religion, and ends by playing the *rôle* of a political opposition.

We see in the Church of Africa in a very striking way all the confusion and strife which such a schism causes, how it injures the cause of Christ, how it finally brings ruin upon itself, and ruins the Church of Christ with it.

In the year 413, the immunity which Africa had enjoyed from the wars and commotions which had harassed the rest of the Roman world was interrupted by the criminal ambition of the Count Heraclian. We have seen that at the time of the greatest peril of Honorius the fidelity of Heraclian and his timely succours had given a favourable turn to the Imperial fortunes. Now when Alaric was dead, and the hopes of Rome were beginning to revive, Heraclian threw off his allegiance, assumed the title of Emperor, gathered together a great fleet, and landed at Ostia at the head of an invading army. He was encountered, however, on his march towards Rome by the Count Marinus, and suffered a total defeat. He fled with a single ship back to Carthage. But the whole province had returned to its allegiance ; the defeated rebel was seized and beheaded. Marinus passed over to Africa

to pursue the accomplices of Heraclian. The Donatists seem to have gained his ear and to have made him the instrument of their hatreds. They obtained of him an order to arrest and imprison Marcellinus and his brother on a charge of treason, and thus revenged themselves for his decision against them at the Conference of Carthage. All the bishops of Africa, with Augustine at their head, and all the most respectable of the people, interceded in behalf of these illustrious prisoners. A deputation was sent to the Court of Ravenna, and Marinus promised to take no steps against them until the return of the deputation conveying the decision of the emperor. The answer of Honorius was most generous ; he declared that he did not offer them a pardon, because that would be to declare that they had been guilty, and he ordered them at once to be set at liberty. Meantime Marinus had not kept his promise ; he had summoned them before his tribunal. When Augustine heard of it, he proceeded at once to Marinus to remonstrate, but while he was yet on the road, he learnt that they had already been sentenced and executed. The emperor was enraged when he heard it, despoiled Marinus of his dignities, and sent him into exile.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BISHOP IN HIS SEE.

Personal Appearance of Augustine—His Dress—Regulation of his Clergy—Ascetic Mode of Life—His Rules at Table—His Preaching—Care of the Poor—Deciding Cases—Relations with the Civil Authorities.

HITHERTO we have regarded Augustine chiefly as the great controversialist and theologian ; let us for a little while look at his home-life as Bishop of Hippo. And here is the place where we should naturally describe the personal appearance of the man. His biographer unfortunately has neglected to draw a portrait of him ; the traditional mediæval representations have no authority ; but we can hardly help trying to imagine what manner of man he was, in order that we may form for ourselves a more vivid picture of the scenes in which he is so often the central figure.

We picture him to ourselves, then, tall, slender, with the narrow chest and slight stoop of the student with weak lungs ; clothed in the long, plain, dark tunic and leather girdle of an ascetic, which more strikingly display these characteristics of his figure. His face—some of our readers would be startled at the first sight of it,—has the dark hue of one who was born and has lived the greater part of his life under the sun of Africa. Features thin and aquiline, with the lofty forehead

which belongs to the metaphysician and poet, eyes full of genius, a mouth and general expression full of sweetness and sensibility, a manner full of dignified courtesy, and that sweet severity which the ascetic life so often seems to give.

We have already seen that while he was yet a priest he lived with his monks in the religious home which Valerius had permitted him to build in the garden adjoining the episcopal church ; when he succeeded Valerius in the see, he still continued to wear his recluse habit, and carried his ascetic mode of life into the episcopal house. Even in his official robes he would not wear costly vestments. When some were presented to him he sold them and gave the price to the poor. He explained in a sermon, "Perhaps a bishop may be allowed to wear a costly vestment, but such does not become Augustine, who is poor, and born of poor parents . . . Would you that men should say that I had found in the Church the means of clothing myself more costly than I should have been able to do in my father's house, or in my secular life ? . . . If you wish me to wear the vestments which are given me, give me such as I shall not blush to wear ; but I confess that a costly habit does make me blush. It does not become my condition, it does not accord with my preaching ; it is not suitable to a body broken with age, and to these gray hairs which you see."

He required his clergy to live with him as a religious community, in celibacy, voluntary poverty, humility, and prayer. They wore the same habit, ate at the same table, lived by the same rule. Augustine had too much moderation to push this life to

the extremities which were not uncommon in his time. Their habit did not affect a picturesque poverty; and their board did not lack both flesh and wine, though they limited themselves chiefly to a vegetable diet. The bishop ruled on the principles which he had himself so much commended in his book on the "Manners of the Catholics," not forcing men to austerities against their power or will. But he was firm in his insistence on the fundamental bases of his rule. We gather here and there little details of this common life; we read of the priest Leporius who had property, but who hastened to dispose of it in acts of charity; we learn that the priest Barnabas was accused (falsely) of having bought land and contracted debts while steward of the episcopal house. The deacon Severus who had lost his sight, but not the inner and spiritual light, wished to bring his mother and sister from a distance to live near him, he was enabled to buy a house for their residence, not with his own money, but by the pious generosity of the faithful; afterwards we find his mother and sister did not come, and Severus put the house at the bishop's disposal again. Another deacon who had slaves before he entered the community, gave them their freedom through the mediation of the bishop in the presence of the congregation.¹

That scandals should sometimes occur under such a rule is only to be expected, but the only one we hear

¹ In accordance with a law of Constantine the Great, which legalized this mode of manumission. See "Constantine the Great," p. 236, S.P.C.K.

of is in the case of the priest Januarius who on his death-bed confessed that he had privily saved some money, and wished to leave it to the Church of Hippo. Augustine refused to receive the legacy.¹ He was much disturbed by the occurrence, and preached two sermons on the subject. In the first he made known the fault of Januarius, and declared that he did not desire to keep his clergy bound to a mode of life which they did not choose of their own free will, and that he would therefore give them all permission to resume their freedom, and would, after the approaching festival of the Epiphany, inform the people what they had resolved to do. Before the second sermon Augustine first bade a deacon read the passage of the Acts of the Apostles which tells of the common life of the first Christian converts of Jerusalem (Acts ii. 44-47 ; iv. 32, 37), and then announced to the people that all the clergy of his community desired to continue to live as the first Christians of Jerusalem had lived ; and that therefore the law of poverty would be rigidly maintained by them ; and that the bishop would cut off from the body of his clergy anyone who, contrary to this rule, possessed any property whatever. "Him whom I shall have condemned in this manner," said he, "let him appeal to a thousand councils against my sentence ; let him, if he will, go and carry his complaint beyond the seas against me ; whatever he may do, I trust, by the divine assistance, that he shall not

¹ An Egyptian abbot under similar circumstances had the bag of money which his monk had saved flung into his grave, with the terrible anathema, "Thy money perish with thee."

be received as a cleric wherever I exercise the authority of a bishop. They have all agreed with cheerfulness to the rule which I have established. I trust in the power and mercy of God that they will conform themselves to it with perfect faithfulness."

A bishop of those days had a constant series of visitors, to whom it was his duty to show a frank hospitality. Augustine received them at the common table of the community; and it was for their sakes especially that the flesh and wine graced the episcopal board:—the table furniture, we are told, was of wood, and pottery, and marble; only the spoons were of silver:—and it was probably for their sakes especially that a verse was carved on the board:—

*Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam
Hanc mensam vetitam noveret esse sibi:—*

"he who loves to tear in pieces the characters of the absent, be it known to him that he is forbidden to sit at this table." And he used to enforce this lesson on guests who disregarded it by saying to them that he must efface his verses, or, that they would compel him to leave the table.

Another objectionable custom of the Christians in the conversation of those days was an unnecessary taking of the Holy Name to witness the truth of what was stated. The bishop used to check this at his own table by imposing a playful penalty on anyone who offended in this respect, the penalty being to go without his wine at dinner.

The incident of Pinianus, which we have related in a previous chapter,¹ helps us to realize the bishop in

¹ Chapter xv.

his principal function, officiating daily in the divine celebration in the principal basilica of the town. We there catch a glimpse of the bishop, with his brother bishop of Thagaste, surrounded by his clergy, in the sanctuary of the church, while the people, it is evident from the narrative, are at some distance from him in the nave. In preaching, and it was the rule for the bishop always to preach, he ascended the ambo, the clergy sat on their stone bench surrounding the eastern apse of the church, and the people stood to hear. Some of the clergy, with practised skill, took down on their tablets the words as they fell from his lips. The great metaphysician, the skilled controversialist, remembered in the pulpit that he was the pastor of his flock, and addressed to them such plain instructions in Christian doctrine, such practical exhortations to holy living, as tended to their edification. Not that his sermons were not great sermons, but that their greatness depended upon their adaptation to the character of the audience, and the effect they had upon them. In reading them as they have come down to us we sometimes wonder at the effect which we are told they produced ; but it is often the case that a sermon which had a great effect in its delivery seems inadequate to produce such an effect when read. Augustine's great reputation pre-disposed the hearers to lend themselves to his eloquence, like instruments ready tuned to the hands of a great player. The persuasive grace, the manifest earnestness, the affection for his hearers, the emotion with which his own soul thrilled communicated by sympathy to the souls of his hearers, the tears which trembled

on his lips when they **did** not overflow his eyes, these were the traits which made the standing crowd which filled the nave of the basilica hang on his words, and thrill and weep with him. We shall more conveniently give some examples of the matter of his sermons in another chapter. We may add here an anecdote as to the external methods and effects of his preaching. On one occasion, while at dinner, he called the attention of those about him to the fact that in his sermon in the morning he had suddenly broken off the thread, and under some sudden impulse had taken up another subject. In a day or two a man came to tell him that, though a Donatist, he had come to the Catholic Church on that morning to hear Augustine preach, and that his sermon had convinced him of his error, and he now desired to be received into the Catholic Church.

The care of the poor was an important part of the bishop's functions, and one which Augustine discharged with loving diligence. "The glory of a bishop," he says, "is his care of the poor." When Alaric was threatening to invade Africa, the people of Hippo set themselves to strengthen the fortifications of their city, and in the anxiety of the time and the demand upon the city's resources the poor were overlooked. Augustine, then absent in Carthage, writes to his flock, and begs them that the usual gift of winter clothing to the poor may not be omitted.

Among the duties of a bishop in those days was that of hearing and deciding cases which were referred to him for decision, instead of being taken before the law-courts. We gather that Augustine

spent much time in the morning in this irksome but important duty, and that the hearing of a case sometimes interfered with the hour of dinner. In one of his sermons¹ he begs the people to pardon him if in the midst of the cares and distractions of the episcopal office he has shown severity or done injustice to any of them. "Often in strait places," he says, "the hen treads, but not with all her weight, upon the chickens whom she warms, but she is not the less their mother."

A man of the eminence of Augustine was also in relation with the civil authorities of Africa. The illustrious and pious Marcellinus was his friend, and it is supposed that it is to his instance that we owe the undertaking of the great work "*On the City of God*." The Count Boniface wrote to him for his spiritual counsels, and maintained a correspondence with him. The bishop made use of his influence to interpose sometimes on behalf of the oppressed, and to intercede for the criminal. Macedonius, the vicar of Africa, after having more than once acceded to the intercession of Augustine, at length wrote to ask him if he thought that Christianity authorized this episcopal disposition to give impunity to crime. Augustine defended his conduct in an admirable letter,² which has been preserved to us. He explains that while he detests the crime he pities the criminal, and that if he interposes to obtain impunity for the crime it is to give the criminal time to repent and enter upon a better life. We can only repent in this world, and

¹ Homily xxiv.

² Letter cliii.

the love which we have for men obliges us to intercede for criminals, lest after the punishment, which ends with their life, they fall into a punishment without end. When his prayers have snatched a criminal from the severity of the laws, he says, he makes him undergo a course of penitence, that he may obtain pardon also of the Master of all justice.

CHAPTER XIX.

HIS SERMONS.

Several Extracts from His Sermons.

WE have in the last chapter said something of the external circumstances of the Bishop of Hippo's preaching. We proceed in the present chapter to illustrate their matter by a few extracts, which need no further preface.

Let us first take a sermon¹ in which there are some striking thoughts on death :—

“A man makes his will before he dies, he is anxious about what he leaves behind, and he is not anxious about himself. Your children will have all, and you nothing. Your mind is concerned to make easy the way of those who come after you, and you give yourself no concern about the way which you yourself are going. Men only think of death when they see a corpse carried to the grave. Then they say ‘Alas ! it is so and so. He was about only yesterday. It is not a week since I saw him ; he spoke to me about such and such a matter. How striking it is ! Man is as nothing here below.’ This is what people say while they are still weeping for the dead, while they prepare his grave, during the funeral

¹ Sermon ccclxi.

procession, and while they lower him into his grave. But once buried, all these thoughts are buried with him. Men again busy themselves with their affairs, and the heir forgets him whom he has just followed to the grave, and calculates the worth of his inheritance. He also must die, but see how he goes on with frauds, rapines, perjuries, to obtain pleasures which perish whilst one tastes them; and, what is worst, men draw from the grave itself an argument for burying the soul: 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' The thought of immortality comes to alleviate the melancholy image of the grave. St. Paul calls the dead *them that sleep*, in order to announce the waking, *i.e.* the resurrection.

"One sometimes hears those who believe in the resurrection of the dead spoken of as mad. 'Who,' they say, 'has returned from the tomb? Who has come to tell us what they do in Hades? Have I ever heard the voice of my brothers, of my grandfather, of my ancestors?' Unhappy that you are, you would believe if your father should rise again from the dead; and after the resurrection of the Lord of all you do not believe. And what could your father do if he were to rise again and come to speak to you but soon return again to death? But see how much greater is here. See with what power Christ is risen again, since 'He dies no more, death hath no more dominion over Him.' The disciples and the faithful have been able to see and to touch Him; their faith was thus confirmed in order that they might afterwards carry it among men. If you take us for impostors, ask all the world; everywhere

Christianity gives life to the world ; those who have not yet believed in Jesus Christ are not bold enough to attack the truth of the resurrection. There is testimony in the heaven, testimony on the earth, testimony of the angels, testimony of Hades ; there is not a single voice which does not cry that Jesus Christ is risen again.

* * * *

“Someone whom you love has ceased to live, you hear her voice no more, she mingles no more among the joys of the living, and you, you weep. Do you also weep over the seed when you have cast it into the earth? If a man, knowing nothing of what happens when one casts seed into the earth, were to lament over the loss of the corn, if he were to groan thinking that the corn is lost, and if he were to fix his eyes full of tears upon the clods which covered it, you, better informed than he, would you not pity his ignorance, would you not say to him : ‘Trouble not yourself ; that which you have buried is no longer in the barn, it is no longer within your reach, but wait a few days and this field which seems to you so barren will be covered with an abundant harvest, and you shall be filled with joy at the sight, as we who, knowing that this will happen, are full of joy in the hope?’

“But the harvests come every year, while the harvest of the human race only takes place once, and that only at the end of this world, we cannot therefore show you that. But the example of one chief grain has been given us. The Lord speaking of his own future death has said, ‘Except a corn of wheat fall to

the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit' (John xii. 24). It is the example of a single grain, but it is so great an example that all ought to have faith because of it. Moreover every creature, if we will hearken, speaks to us of the resurrection ; and these daily examples ought to make us know what God will do also with the human race. The resurrection of the dead shall take place only once, but the sleep and waking of everything which breathes takes place every day, and we see in sleep the image of death, and in the waking the image of the resurrection. From that which happens every day believe that which will happen once. How do the leaves of the trees fall and put forth again? Where do they go when they fall? Whence do they come when they spring again? Behold the winter ; all the trees are sapless and seem dead ; but spring comes, and all reclothe themselves with leaves. Is it the first time this phenomenon has happened? No, the same happened last year. The year then goes and returns ; and men made in the image of God—when they go shall they never return?"

Here is a doctrinal passage : — "The Eternal Word, in becoming man, has no more changed than a man who takes a garment ; he does not become garment but continues always the same. If a senator forbidden to enter in the habit of a senator into a prison where he wished to go in order to console an unfortunate slave, took the habit of a slave, he would appear mean as to his exterior, but he would still retain his dignity, and this dignity but

be heightened by so much as the deliverer had been willing to abase himself in his great pity.

“To be born, to labour, and to die ; these are the fruits this earth produces ; this is what Jesus Christ found among men. What has He given in exchange ? Regeneration, resurrection, life eternal !”

When he speaks of God he is always eloquent : “O my beloved brethren,” he cries in another sermon,¹ “what transitory word like ours can worthily praise the Eternal Word, the Word of God ? How shall so poor an instrument recount the infinite grandeurs ? Let the heavens praise Him ; let the heights of heaven praise Him ; let the powers of the air praise Him ; let the great lights of heaven and the stars re-echo His glory ; let the earth praise Him as well as it is able ; if it knows not how to praise Him worthily, at least let it not be ungrateful. Declare and know Him who in His power reaches from one end to the other, and who ordereth all things by His goodness. How doth He rise to run this immense course in which He goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and runneth about unto the uttermost part of the heaven again. If he reacheth everywhere, whence doth He set out ? And if He reaches everywhere, whither does He go ? He is not limited by place nor changed by time ; He has neither coming in nor going out ; dwelling in Himself He filleth and encompasseth all things. What spaces do not possess Him in His omnipotence, and contain Him in

¹ Sermon ccclxxvii.

His immensity, and feel Him in His activity. Consider all that I have said, and it is as nothing. But in order that humble creatures might be able to say something of Him, He humbled himself in the form of a servant; He came down in the form of a servant, and, according to the Gospel, He grew by degrees in knowledge and wisdom. Under the form of a servant, He was patient and fought valiantly; He died, and conquered death. Under this form He returned to heaven, He who had never left heaven. . . . Who is then this King of Glory, for whom it is said, '*Lift up your gates, O princes, be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors.*' *Lift yourselves up*, for He is great; you will not be great enough for Him; *lift up yourselves* that this King of Glory may come in. And the princes are astonished, they know Him not. '*Who is this King of Glory?*' He is not only God, He is also man; He is not only man, but He is God. He suffers, nevertheless He is God. He rises again, nevertheless He is man. Is He, then, God and man? '*Lift up your gates, O princes, be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall enter in.*' . . . It is a new thing for Hades to receive a God. It is a new thing for the heavens to receive a man; and everywhere the princes, in surprise, ask, '*Who is this King of Glory?*' Harken to the answer! '*It is the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.*'"

Let us choose an extract of another kind.¹ "The first disciples upon whom the Paraclete descended

¹ Sermon ccxlvii

received the gift of tongues. If the Holy Spirit is still given to us now, why does no one any longer speak the languages of all nations? Why, because that which was signified by the gift of tongues is now fulfilled. In that first time the whole Church was contained within the single house where the disciples were assembled. Consisting of men small in number, but rich in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, she possessed already all the languages of the universe; but this Church so small, speaking the languages of all people, is it not the same Church which now stretches from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, and which is speaking always in the languages of all people?

“Let no one then say, ‘If I have received the Holy Spirit, why do I not speak the languages of all nations?’ The spirit which gives life to each one of us is called the soul, and you see what the soul effects in the body; it puts life into all the members. By the eyes it sees; by the ears it hears; by the nose it smells; by the tongue it speaks; by the feet it walks; by the hands it labours; it is present in all the members that they may live; it gives life to all, and to each its function. The eye does not hear; the ear does not see; neither the eye nor the ear speak; and while the whole lives the functions are divided, the life is common. So is the Church of God. In some of the saints it works miracles; in others it preaches the truth; in these it maintains virginity, in those conjugal chastity; the works are different according to the difference of the persons. Each has his peculiar work, but all participate in the

same life. That which the soul is to the human body the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church. That which the soul effects in a single body, the Holy Spirit effects in the whole Church. But observe what it is you ought to avoid, to do, and to fear. In the human body it happens sometimes that a member is cut off—a hand, a finger, a foot. Does the soul accompany the severed member? While it was joined to the body it lived; when it is cut off it loses life. So the Christian, while he is a member of the Church his life in his body, he is a Catholic. Is he cut off, he becomes a heretic: the spirit does not accompany the severed member. . . .

“O Church of Jesus Christ, true Temple of the King which is built of men, whose living stones are the faithful sons of God. One Temple, all whose parts, firmly united, form but one whole, where there is no ruin, or rent, or division; charity is the cement thereof. Jesus Christ sent His ambassadors. The Apostles gave birth to the Church, they are our fathers. But they were not able to remain long with us. He who desired to leave the world, but who for their sakes prolonged his days among his brethren, even he is departed. Is the Church therefore abandoned? Not so. It is written, ‘Instead of your fathers you shall have children:’ instead of the Apostles bishops have been appointed your fathers. The Church gives to bishops the name of fathers, and it is she who has given them birth. O holy Church, think not that you are abandoned because you no longer see Peter, because you no longer see Paul, nor the rest of the fathers who have begotten you.

See how the temple of God is increased ! See the Catholic Church : her children are established as princes on the earth ; they have been appointed in the place of fathers. Let those who are separated return to the temple of the King. God has established His temple everywhere, everywhere He has firmly set the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.

“ We call to mind the stone of which Daniel speaks. This stone, cut out from a mountain, which is itself become a great mountain, has filled all the earth. This stone is Jesus Christ, who has broken in pieces the empire of idols and filled the whole universe with His glory. Behold the vast mountain which all eyes can see. Behold the city of which it is said, ‘ A city set upon a hill cannot be hid.’ But there are men who run against this mountain ; and while we say to them ‘ Come up,’ they answer, ‘ There is nothing,’ and prefer to stun their heads against it than take up their abode in it. . . . O my brother what are you doing in obscure retreats ? Why are you seeking in the midst of darkness ? ‘ He has placed his tabernacle in the sun.’ . . . There are who say this Church has lived long enough, it is dead. O impious words ! Does it exist no longer because you have separated yourself from it ? Take care lest you die speedily, while it lives on for ever without you ! ”

CHAPTER XX.

SPECIAL WORKS :—"THE CONFESSIONS," "THE HOLY TRINITY," "THE CITY OF GOD."

Description of "The Confessions"—The Work on the "Holy Trinity"—Two Anecdotes—"The City of God"—Extracts from it.

MERELY to give a catalogue of the numerous works of Augustine would fill several of these pages, and such a mere catalogue would be useless to our readers; to attempt the briefest description of the works would occupy far too much of our space, and perhaps of our readers' patience. It will probably be more useful to select two or three of the most popularly interesting works, and to say a few words about them.

Among these special works, we must name first that remarkable book "The Confessions," which we have already so largely quoted as the chief authority for the earlier part of the biographical matter of our sketch. It has had by far the largest circulation of any of his works, and may perhaps be classed with "The Imitation of Christ," and the "Pilgrim's Progress," as one of the three most popular religious books in the world. Its characteristics are the frankness of its confessions; its wonderful analysis of a human heart, and a religious experience; the literary skill with which it is executed. No doubt the great cause of its popularity is that it has supplied a mirror in which so many have recognised the likeness of their own spiritual struggles, have learnt to understand them-

selves, and have been able to study the process by which they might co-operate with the grace of God in attaining truth and peace.

The great work "On the Holy Trinity," he began, he says, when young, and finished when old. He seems to have commenced it about the year 400, to have laid it aside, and resumed it more than once, and to have finished it at length about the year 416 or 418. The subject had engaged all the great minds of the Eastern Churches for a century, and the works produced during the Arian and kindred controversies had enriched the theology of the Greek-speaking Christians. But these controversies had been agitated chiefly among the Eastern Christians ; the West, orthodox-minded throughout, had contented itself with accepting the orthodox definitions of the Eastern Councils. The great writings of the Greeks had not been translated into Latin, and were unknown in the West, except to a very few of its most learned scholars. The doctrine therefore remained to be set before the Western Church as fully and profoundly as it had been before the Eastern. This is the task which Augustine accomplished. It is probable, from his limited acquaintance with Greek, that he did not derive so much help from the labour of the Greek theologians as might have been supposed ; but the originality and power of his own genius made him the one man in the Western Church who without such aid was equal to the work. No one has written with more profound insight, more sound theology, or greater eloquence on this great theme. And all subsequent writers upon it have done little

more than reproduce his thoughts. It would be easy to give a summary of the contents of the work, but of little interest to our readers. We prefer to record two legendary stories which serve to show the popular appreciations of the great work and of its writer.

The first story is the well-known one, that while Augustine, meditating on the Trinity, was walking to-and-fro on the sea-shore of Hippo, he saw a little child, busy, as children will be, digging a hole in the sand, and then filling it with water which he fetched in a cockle-shell from the sea. Augustine paused and spoke to the child : "What are you doing, my child ?" "I am trying to empty the sea into this hole which I have dug." "My child, it is impossible to get the great sea into that small cavity." "Not more impossible, Augustine," replied the angel, "than for thy finite mind to comprehend the mystery of the Trinity."

The other story, which is less known, gives the opposite view of the work. A woman of Hippo, who had some favour to ask of Augustine, sought him in his room, and finding him apparently disengaged, addressed her petition to him with humility and earnestness ; but he did not even turn his head to look at her. Again she ventured to address him still more urgently, but he did not take the slightest notice of her ; and she went away discouraged. Next morning as she attended at the Divine Service at which the bishop officiated, she was rapt in spirit into heaven, and there saw Augustine before the Throne, absorbed in contemplation of Him who sat thereon. A voice told her that when she had sought him on the previous day in his chamber, though his body was there,

he had been thus absent in spirit, in contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity ; therefore he had not seen or heard her : but bade her seek him again, and he would do all she wished.

The book entitled "The City of God," begun in 412, and finished in 427, three years before his death, is one of the most important monuments of Christian antiquity. As the strange succession of misfortunes which overtook the persecuting emperors and their families a century before, in contrast with the prosperity of Constantius and Constantine, had made the whole world declare that the God of the Christians was revealing Himself in the providential government of the world, so now the rapid and terrible succession of disasters which overwhelmed the Western Empire made men look round for a supernatural explanation of the awful judgment ; and the Pagans loudly declared that it was the manifest vengeance of the ancient gods of Rome on the race which had deserted the altars of the deities who had given their ancestors a thousand years of conquest. The mind of the Christian world was greatly troubled. It had fondly believed that the general adoption of Christianity by the Empire was to be the beginning of that last age of universal peace and happiness which the ancient prophets had foretold. And when the Christian empire thus fell, under circumstances which men had been accustomed to regard as denoting the manifest anger and just judgment of God, the faith of Christians was shaken ; and they knew not how to answer the taunts of those who accused them of having been the cause of the ruin of the world.

It gave rise to a new series of Apologies. Every great Christian preacher found himself called upon, not only to defend Christianity against the pagans when they turned the argument from the providential government of the world against them, but also to reassure the minds of perplexed Christians, and to comfort the faithful under these unexpected and terrible calamities. Ambrose, in his reply to Symmachus pleading on behalf of the Altar of Victory and the old religion, had already laid down the main lines of the argument.¹ Jerome dealt with the subject in his letters. Orosius, the Spaniard, wrote a book upon it. Salvian, a generation later, wrote another. It was at the request of others that Augustine at length addressed himself to a thorough treatment of the theme; and this grew under his hands into the important work, the most important of all his works, of which we are now to give some brief account.

The books included under the common title of "The City of God," form almost two distinct works. The first, which occupies the first ten books, is devoted to the special question which gave rise to the work. The pagans maintained that the gods, angered by the desertion of their worship and the general adoption of Christianity, had withdrawn from the Romans and transferred to the barbarians that favour which had constituted the good fortune of pagan Rome. Augustine first enumerates with much eloquence the misfortunes which Rome had suffered under the alleged protection of these gods. They

"The Fathers for English Readers : St. Ambrose," p. 46.

did not save Troy¹ from destruction. They did not protect Rome from the Gauls, from the Tuscans. They did not save Regulus. They did not arrest the arms of Pyrrhus, of Hannibal. Where were their protecting deities on the days of defeat and slaughter at Ticinus, at Thrasymentus, at Cannæ? on the day when 80,000 Romans were slaughtered by Mithridates? in the days of the wars and proscriptions of Marius and Sulla? Had Alaric been more cruel than the old Consul or the fortunate Dictator? And in the civil wars of Cæsar and Pompey, and the proscriptions of Antony and the young Octavius, and the rout of Crassus—where were the gods when all these misfortunes fell upon the Romans? Then, also, they never protected the vanquished from the victors. "Open," says Augustine, "open the histories of all the wars, whether before the foundation of Rome or since the establishment of the Empire; read them, and show us foreigners and enemies, when masters of a city, sparing those who have taken refuge in the temples of their gods; show us a barbarian chief giving the order, when the city was at his mercy, to spare all who should be found in such and such a temple." He alludes to the fact that Alaric gave orders that those who sought refuge in the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul should not be molested.

"Priam slain upon the altar extinguished with his blood the fires he had kindled. Diomedes and Ulysses 'slew the guards of the citadel, and seizing

¹ The reader will bear in mind that the Romans claimed to be the descendants of a colony of Trojans who, after the destruction of their city, had settled in Italy.

the statue of the goddess, dared to touch her chaste fillets with their bloody hands' " (*Æneid*, lib. II. l. 163). "See, then, to what gods the Romans boast of having confided the tutelage of their city. O ever worthy of immeasurable pity! These gods—what sort of gods are they? Virgil declares they were conquered; to escape the conqueror they were indebted to the piety of a man.¹ And Rome was wisely committed to such protectors, and but for their loss its ruin would have been impossible! What folly. Why, to honour as saviours and patrons these vanquished gods is to attach your destinies rather to unfavourable auspices than to beneficent deities. For is it not infinitely wiser to believe, not that Rome in preserving them had averted its own ruin, but that they would have long since been lost if Rome had not generously taken them under the protection of its power?"

He enumerates the Roman divinities, with their characters and their special ministries, and shows that the aggrandizement and the duration of the Empire were not the work of any of them, neither the work of destiny, which has no existence. It was not fortune or chance which made the Roman Empire. Then in a grand passage he vindicates the truth of the question. It is the providence of God which establishes the kingdoms of the earth; which distributes them to the good and to the evil. The

¹ *Æneas* says to *Anchises*, as they make their escape from burning *Troy*, "You, my father, take in your hand these sacred things, our country's household gods."—"*Æneid*," lib. II. l. 717.

kingdoms are governed by the providence of God. He who is the creator of all intelligences and all bodies, who is the source of all happiness, who has made man a reasonable animal composed of a soul and a body, who has given to the evil and to the good existence with the stones, vegetative life with the trees, sensitive life with the beasts, intellectual life with the angels ; God, from whom proceed all form, all beauty, all order ; God, who is the principle of measure, number, and weight, and by whom all things in nature exist ; He from whom the germs derive their forms, and forms their germs, and both their mutual relations ; Who has made flesh and given it its beauty, its strength, its fruitfulness, the suppleness of its members and their proportions ; He who has given memory, sense, and desires, even to the souls of beasts, and has added to the human soul mind, understanding, will ; He who has given mutual fitness and harmony, not only to the heavens and the earth, to angels and to men, but to the entrails of the smallest and meanest animal, to the feather of the bird, the flower of the smallest herb, the leaf of the tree, He could not leave the kingdoms and empires of the world outside the laws of His Providence.

“See, then, why the true God, who holds all the kingdoms in His hand has deigned to aid the Roman Empire, and to raise it to such a height of grandeur. The power of Rome was the reward of the moral virtues of the ancient Romans, laborious, unselfish, temperate, devoted exclusively to the glory of the State. ‘ Verily, I say unto you they have their reward.’ . . . If Christians wish to make sure of future happi-

ness, let them do in order to obtain heaven all which the Romans did to conquer the earth. Nay, one does not always ask so much of them. But the labours, the abnegation, the sacrifices of the ancient Romans were a great lesson to Christians who aspire to the Eternal Empire. Just as God makes His sun to shine on the good and on the wicked, and His rain to fall on the just and on the unjust, so He gives to them indifferently the kingdoms of this world, but the kingdom of Heaven He gives only to the good.

“I return to my subject, impatient, with a last word on the ingratitude of these blasphemers who impute to Christ the evils which their own perversity has so justly drawn upon themselves; they so unworthy of pardon, but pardoned for the love of Christ while they are ignorant of it; they whose arrogant folly against this Divine Name, those sacrilegious tongues which have falsely taken the name upon themselves to save themselves from death; these pusillanimous tongues, speechless lately in the holy places which they found safe asylums, inviolable ramparts, against the fury of the enemy, and from which they issue furious enemies, uttering curses against their Deliverer.¹ . . .

“Ruin, murder, pillage, fire, desolation—all the horrors which have happened in the recent disaster of Rome—are the result of the customs of war. But that which is strange and new in it is that the ferocity

¹ He alludes to the fact that many of the pagans took refuge in the churches, and thus professing to be Christians, were saved.

of barbarians should become so merciful as to point out to the people the two greatest basilicas as an asylum where no one should be hurt, whence no one should be dragged ; to which the more humane of the conquerors led their captives in order to secure their freedom, from which the more cruel might not take them to sell them into slavery. It is to the Name of Christ, it is to the Christian religion, that the honour of this clemency is due. He who does not see it is blind ; he who does not see it with silent submission is ungrateful ; he who speaks against these acts of mercy is mad."

Augustine mentions one incident of the sack which brings all these general statements more vividly before the mind. We tell it in the words of Gibbon :¹—
"While the barbarians roamed through the city in quest of prey, the humble dwelling of an aged virgin who had devoted her life to the service of the altar was forced open by one of the powerful Goths. He immediately demanded, though in civil language, all the gold and silver in her possession ; and was astonished at the readiness with which she conducted him to a splendid hoard of massy plate of the richest materials and the most curious workmanship. The barbarian viewed with wonder and delight this valuable acquisition, till he was interrupted by a serious admonition, addressed to him in the following words : 'These,' said she, 'are the consecrated vessels belonging to St. Peter ; if you presume to touch them, the sacrilegious deed will remain on your conscience.

¹ "Decline and Fall," book xxxi.

For my part I dare not keep what I am unable to defend.' The Gothic captain, struck with reverential awe, despatched a messenger to tell the king what he had discovered; and received a peremptory order from Alaric that all the consecrated plate and ornaments should be transported without damage or delay to the Church of the Apostle. From the extremity, perhaps, of the Quirinal Hill to the distant quarter of the Vatican, a numerous detachment of Goths, marching in order of battle through the principal streets, protected, with glittering arms, the long train of their devout companions who bore aloft on their heads the sacred vessels of gold and silver, and the martial shouts of the barbarians were mingled with the sound of religious psalmody. From all the adjacent houses a crowd of Christians hastened to join this edifying procession; and a multitude of fugitives, without distinction of age or rank or even of sect, had the good fortune to escape to the secure and hospitable sanctuary of the Vatican."

In the second section of "The City of God," extending over the five books, from the tenth to the fifteenth, the author treats of the second part of his subject: the gods of paganism, useless in this world to their worshippers, and even hurtful to them by the example of the infamies which mythology and the poets relate of them, are also entirely useless to them after this life.

Long and learned details on the pagan mythology on the doctrines of the poets, and of the principal philosophers of antiquity, and the analysis of a great work by Varro, entirely lost to us, make this second

part full of interest, at the same time that it is full of great historical value. "It is a far more comprehensive survey of the whole religious philosophy of antiquity than had been yet displayed in any Christian work."¹ In his zeal for the destruction of paganism he pursues it even to its last refuges; he unveils its miseries, its contradictions, its shameful mysteries; he strips it of the brilliant mantle with which the poets have toned it down, and exposes it naked to the derision of the world, an object of scorn to its own adherents, and of disgust not only to the Christian but to every honourable mind. It must be admitted, however, that in the multifarious mass of knowledge, brought together with great learning and industry, and amidst digressions, always interesting in themselves, we often lose sight of the main purpose of the work.

The second part of the work, consisting of the last twelve chapters, takes up a new theme. Its subject is the development of the two rival ideas of human life, as shown in the actual history of the world. He traces from the earliest days the history of what he calls the City of Men and the City of God. These cities are built upon two contrary affections. Love of self, carried to the length of disregard of God, makes the City of Men. The love of God, carried to the length of contempt of self, makes the City of God. This thought is the soul of the work. It begins with the division of the angels; then it pursues the subject on earth and in heaven. On earth where

¹ Dean Milman, "Hist. of Christianity," book iii. chap. 10.

men divide themselves into worshippers of the true God and worshippers of false gods. Cain and Abel or rather Seth, are the fathers of the two cities of earth and of heaven. And from this beginning of the history of the human race the author gives a survey of sacred history which brings out the philosophy of the Old Testament history. Then he gives a summary of secular history from the Assyrian monarchy downwards, again bringing out the philosophy of the history of the world—*i.e.*, in both cases exhibiting the course of human history flowing on under the influences of the passions and interests and free will of men, but always under the guiding hand of the providence of God.

He does not overlook such telling facts as that the Hebrew prophets preceded the philosophers: Pythagoras, the earliest, did not appear till after the Babylonian Captivity; that the sacred authors are all agreed on the facts and the doctrines of religion, while the philosophers hold the most contradictory opinions. Varro, he says, counted 284 different philosophical opinions on what was the sovereign good. Augustine is the first to utter the thought which has been reproduced with great effect by several modern writers, that Providence made use of Rome as an instrument to unite the nations under one law, and so prepare the way for Christ. The nineteenth book contains some striking and original thoughts on the tendency of all things in the world towards peace; the desire for which is at the bottom of every human soul, whatever violent passions agitate it. He speaks the mind of the Church on the subject of the institu-

tion of slavery which formed the very basis of Roman society. "It is not," he says, "in conformity with the law of nature ; it is one of the consequences of sin ; it is a degeneration of man. God said, ' Let man have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the animals upon earth ; ' but He did not say let man have dominion over man. . . . All progress towards good will be a progress towards liberty." The twenty-fourth and last chapter is an eloquent representation of the joys and splendours conferred upon man in this magnificent world, from which he draws the deduction, if God has deigned to give to man during his laborious pilgrimage here so beautiful a dwelling, what will be the ineffable beauty of the future dwelling of the blessed, where there will be neither wars, nor sufferings, nor death ?

"The City of God" is one of those immortal works sealed by the admiration of all succeeding ages, and which must ever retain its value. "It is," says M. Poujoulat, "the Encyclopædia of the fifth century." It traverses the whole field of the knowledge of the ancient world. It is the Christian poem of the destinies of the human race. It has been said, in depreciation, that much of Augustine's learning was second-hand. But his reputation does not rest on his learning. Jerome was, beyond question, the great scholar of the age, as Ambrose was the great ecclesiastical statesman, and Chrysostom the great preacher. Augustine was the great thinker of the age ; he takes, as by right, all the learning of the ancient world which students had gathered together, as the raw material of his philosophy.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY.

Ancient Faith of the Church—Pelagius's Views—Shared by Celestius—Celestius condemned at Carthage—Pelagius's Letter to Demetrius—Pelagius tried before a Synod of Jerusalem—Acquitted by a Synod of Diospolis—Celestius acquitted by Zosimus—African Council refuses to acquit him—Zosimus condemns him—Pelagianism spreads in Gaul; in Britain—Increase of Augustine's reputation.

THERE were three great controversies in which Augustine was engaged—not to mention occasional treatises against the expiring pagan philosophy, and Arianism revived in Africa by the influx of the Arian Vandals—three great controversies extending over a number of years, and overlapping one another.

The first was the Manichæan controversy. Manichæanism was indeed dying out without Augustine's aid, but probably his own antecedents made him consider it a duty specially incumbent upon him to embrace every opportunity of opposing the error which he had once helped to defend and spread.

The second great controversy was against Donatism. No doubt this great schism was the greatest evil against which the Church in Africa had to contend, and Augustine's triumph over it was a very considerable and important achievement. But it was almost

a local schism, hardly known in other branches of the Church.

"The Pelagian controversy was that as to which Augustine exercised the most powerful influence on his own age, and which has chiefly made his authority important through succeeding times."¹ The great controversies which had hitherto agitated the Church arose in the East, and all related to the nature of the Godhead and the relations of the Persons of the Holy Trinity; one was now to arise in the West on the nature of man and his relations to God.

It had always been held in the Church, though no occasion had called for precise and authoritative definitions on the subject, that Adam had transmitted to his posterity an inheritance of sinfulness, but that man's will was free to choose good or evil, to receive or reject salvation.

Augustine himself had modified his views with the course of time and study. In his earlier writings against the Manichæans he had maintained the absolute freedom and sufficiency of man's will to receive or reject the offers of God. But as early as A.D. 397 he had come to regard faith and a good will as also effects of Divine grace. "Pelagianism was a natural reaction, if not directly against Augustine's teaching, yet against those views of which Augustine is the most distinguished representative."²

Pelagius is believed to have been a Briton, the first native of our island who distinguished himself in

¹ Canon Robertson's "Hist. of the Christian Church," ii. 139.

² Canon Mozley's "Treatise on the Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination," p. 46.

literature or theology. The name by which he was generally known is traditionally said to be a Greek translation of his British name of Morgan, *i.e.*, sea-born. He had embraced the ascetic life, like nearly all the foremost churchmen of the times, and from his acquaintance with the Greek language and the Greek theological writings, it is supposed that he had resided in the East. About the end of the fourth century he took up his abode at Rome, where he was admitted into the highest Christian society, and his abilities obtained him a considerable reputation. His temper and tone of mind led him to regard with suspicion and dislike the school of theology which tended to represent man as entirely evil by nature, and entirely helpless to embrace and pursue good. He ran to the opposite extreme; and taught that the fallen human nature, as we inherit it, unchanged, and left man's will free to choose good and to pursue it; while he did not deny that God gives grace, and that grace is a powerful aid in the spiritual life. Pelagius taught such doctrines as these in his private teachings, but seems to have made no attempt to call general attention to them or to found a school.

At Rome Pelagius became acquainted with Celestius, who from a characteristic expression¹ of Jerome has been supposed to be a Scot, *i.e.* a native of Ireland. Celestius, a man of family, who had practised as an advocate, and had forsaken that profession for an ascetic life, had adopted the same kind of opinions as Pelagius, whether from him, or independently, does

¹ *Scotorum pultibus prægravatus—i.e.*, heavy with Scotch porridge.

not appear, and his temperament led him to put them forward more publicly and maintain them with more of self-assertion.

After the sack of Rome the two friends sought refuge, like so many others, in Africa ; Pelagius shortly went on to the East, leaving Celestius at Carthage, and it does not appear that they ever met again.

The controversy began about Celestius. He sought to obtain ordination as a priest at Carthage ; but Paulinus, who had formerly been a deacon at Milan, and who is known to us as the biographer of Ambrose,¹ interposed, and charged him with heretical opinions. The question was examined by a synod. He was accused of holding that Adam would have died, even if he had not sinned ; that his sin did not injure any but himself ; that infants are born in the condition in which Adam originally was ; that neither do all mankind die in Adam, nor do they rise again in Christ ; that infants though unbaptized have eternal life ; that the Law admitted to the kingdom of heaven, even as the Gospel does ; and that before our Lord's coming there were men without sin. He defended himself by saying that he allowed the necessity of infant baptism ; that the propositions generally, whether true or not, related to matters of speculation on which the Church had given no decision ; and that consequently they could not be heretical. The council however condemned and excommunicated him. He appealed to the Bishop of Rome,—the first appeal

¹ "Fathers for English Readers : Ambrose."

which is recorded as having been made to Rome from another province.¹ No notice was taken of his appeal, and Celestius left Carthage for Ephesus.

Augustine was now drawn into the controversy. The progress of the new opinions attracted his attention. He was induced to write two tracts against them for the satisfaction of the Count Marcellinus ; and at the request of the Bishop Aurelius he preached against them at Carthage.

The history of the controversy now shifts to Pelagius in the Holy Land. At first Jerome was on friendly terms with him as a learned ascetic, but he soon found out his heterodox views and became his vehement opponent.

It was soon after his settlement in Palestine that Pelagius received the request, which we have had occasion to mention elsewhere,² from Proba, the mother of Demetrius, to address some counsels to her daughter on the occasion of her professing virginity. The letter throws light upon the habitual teaching of Pelagius³ :—" He tells Demetrius that it is his practice in such matters to begin by laying down what human nature can do, lest, from an insufficient conception of its powers, too low a standard of duty and exertion should be taken ; for, he says, men are careless in proportion as they think meanly of themselves, and for this reason it is that Scripture so often endeavours to animate us by styling us sons of God. The powers of man, like the faculties and instincts of all creatures, are God's gifts. Instead of

¹ Robertson, ii. 144.

² *Supra* p. 137, note.

³ Robertson, ii. 145.

thinking, with the vulgar, that the power of doing evil is a defect in man--instead of reproaching the Creator as if he had made man evil—we ought rather to regard the enjoyment of free will as a special dignity and prerogative of our nature. He dwells on the virtues of those who had lived before the Saviour's coming, and declares the conscience, which approves or reproofs our actions, to be, so to speak, a sort of natural holiness in our souls.

In July, 415, Pelagius was charged with heresy before John, bishop of Jerusalem, and a synod of his clergy, by Orosius, a young Spanish priest who had lately come into the Holy Land with a recommendation from Augustine to Jerome. The accuser related the proceedings which had taken place at Carthage in the case of Celestius, and read a letter from Augustine. Pelagius asked, "What is Augustine to me?" but was rebuked for speaking disrespectfully of a great prelate by whom unity had been restored to the African Church. The inquiry was conducted under difficulties. Orosius could not speak Greek; the members of the Synod could not speak Latin; the interpreter was unskilful or unfaithful; the bishop was disposed to think the young Spaniard hasty in his accusations, and to take a favourable view of Pelagius. Orosius at length proposed that as the question was one of Latin theology, and as the parties were Latins, it should be referred to the chief bishop of the Latin Church, the Bishop of Rome. To this John agreed, ordering in the meantime that Pelagius should refrain from publishing his opinions, and that his opponents should refrain from molesting him.

We need hardly point out that this reference to the Bishop of Rome was a natural one under the circumstances, and involves no acknowledgment of the later pretensions of that see.

At the end of the same year two bishops of Gaul brought an accusation against Pelagius before Eulogius, the metropolitan of Cæsarea, who summoned a synod of fourteen bishops to Diospolis (the ancient Lydda). When the synod met, however, one of the accusers was sick; the other excused himself on account of his companion's illness; and Pelagius was left to make his case good without opposition. He disavowed some of the opinions attributed to him, explained others, and his statement appeared to the synod to be satisfactory. The acts of the Synod of Carthage were read. Pelagius declined to enter into the question whether Celestius held the opinions attributed to him, but declared that he himself did not; he consented to anathematize the holders of these and similar opinions of which he had been accused; and the council recognized his orthodoxy. Pelagius was much elated, and shortly after put forth a book, "On the Freedom of the Will."

The history shifts again to Celestius and to Rome. Celestius had procured ordination as priest at Ephesus; he appeared again in Rome, and taking occasion from Pelagius's acquittal by the Synod of Diospolis, he requested that his own opinions might be re-examined. Zosimus, the bishop of Rome, was won over to believe in the orthodoxy of Celestius, and after having held a council, at which Celestius disavowed all doctrines which the Roman see had

condemned, he wrote a letter of reproof to the Africans, blaming them for listening too readily to charges against good men. The African prelates, assembled in synod at Carthage, asserted their independence of Rome ; declared that their condemnation of Celestius must stand till he had clearly retracted his errors ; and passed nine canons (A.D. 418), which were afterwards generally accepted throughout the Church, and came to be regarded as the most important bulwark against Pelagianism. In forwarding these canons to Rome, the African prelates retorted upon Zosimus that he himself had been hasty in his credulity, and exposed the artifices by which Celestius had disguised his errors. From this time Augustine no longer spoke of the Pelagians as brethren but as heretics.

The civil power now intervened, probably at the solicitation of the Africans ; declared the Pelagians heretics, and subjected them to disabilities and penalties. Zosimus, pressed by the Court and by the anti-Pelagian party in Rome, professed an intention of re-examining the whole matter, and summoned Celestius to appear before a council. Celestius quitted Rome. Zosimus condemned him and Pelagius as heretics, accepted the African decisions, and required all bishops to subscribe them as a test of orthodoxy.

The views known by the name of Pelagius nevertheless spread. Nineteen Italian bishops were deposed for holding them. A modification of them conveniently described as semi-Pelagianism prevailed in Gaul, and the Gallic bishops appealed to Augustine for the help of his pen. They spread in Britain, and

the British clergy appealed to the Church of Gaul for aid, which (A.D. 429) sent two of its ablest bishops, Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes, and again in answer to a second appeal (in A.D. 447) sent Germanus and Severus to aid them in their controversy with the heretics.

In all this controversy Augustine, with the general assent, took the foremost place as the champion of orthodox truth. A council of bishops held at Milevis and another at Carthage formally charged him to study the doctrine of the Church on the questions raised by Celestius and Pelagius, and to deal with them in a special work. Jerome said, "Since Augustine, this holy and eloquent bishop, has resolved to write against Pelagius, I consider myself dispensed henceforward from this duty, considering it unnecessary. For either I should say the same things as he, which would be superfluous, or I should say different things, and then I could not be otherwise than inferior to this eminent mind, which will always anticipate me in that which it is best to say." In short, the credit of meeting promptly, sagaciously, and effectually these dangerous opinions, is due especially to the African Church, and in that Church especially to Augustine. The controversy greatly added to his reputation throughout the Church. Prosper of Aquitaine celebrated his glory in verse. Jerome wrote to express his admiration and affection:—"Preserve," said he, "this great reputation which you have acquired throughout the whole world. The Catholics respect and admire you as the restorer of the ancient faith, and what is not less glorious, you are an object of hate and terror to the heretics."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE AUGUSTINIAN THEOLOGY

The Philosophical Theory of the Freedom of the Will—Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin : of Predestination : of Efficacious Grace : of Final Perseverance—The Flaw in this Theology.

WE have spoken generally of the eminence of Augustine as a theologian. It remains to be said that he held certain views on predestination and on grace which run through all the writings of his later life, so as to give a special tone to his theology and to differentiate his system of doctrine, as a whole, from the catholic theology, and to form an Augustinian school of thought.

The subject has been thoroughly treated in Canon Mozley's work on the Augustinian doctrine of Predestination,¹ and some extracts from his work, with a few connecting sentences, will sufficiently place the subject in outline before our readers.

"The Western Church, as a whole, has entered more deeply into the mysteries of the inner man than the Eastern has, into that mixed sense of spiritual weakness and desire, of a void which no efforts can fill, and of a struggle endless upon all natural prin-

¹ London : J. Murray. 1878.

ciples. . . . Tertullian first set the example of strength and copiousness in laying down the nature of original sin ; he was followed by Cyprian and Ambrose. But language could not ultimately rest in a stage, in which, however strong and significant, it did not state what definite thing had happened to human nature in consequence of the fall, and just stopped short of expressing what, upon a real examination, it meant. If a man is able to do a right action, and does a wrong one, he is personally guilty, indeed, but it cannot be said that his nature is corrupt. The passions and affections may be inconveniently strong, and so the nature be at a disadvantage ; but no mere strength of the passions and affections show the nature corrupt so long as the will retains its power. On the contrary, the nature is proved to be fundamentally sound, by the very fact of its being equal to the performance of the right act. The test of a sound or corrupt nature, then, is an able or an impotent will ; and, if a corruption of nature means anything at all, it means the loss of free will. This was the legitimate advance which was wanted to complete the expression of the doctrine ; and this complement was left to Augustine to give.

“ Philosophy raises an insuperable difficulty to the freedom of any created will ; for freedom of the will implies an original source of action in the being who has it, original not relatively only, in the way in which any cause, however secondary, is original as compared with its effect, but absolutely ; to be an original cause of anything is contrary to the very essence of a being who is not original. Tertullian

had a distinct philosophical conception of this difficulty, and met it by the only answer open to a believer in free will, an assertion of the truth together with an acknowledgment of the difficulty. Originality is the highest form of being; and everything which does not move itself, whatever be its grandeur or sublimity as a spectacle, is intrinsically despicable in comparison with that which does. The Divine Power, then, resolving upon its own highest exertion, chose originality itself as a subject of creation, and made a being which, when made, was in its turn truly creative, the author and cause of its own motions and acts. And whereas the creature would, as such, have possessed nothing of his own, God, by an incomprehensible act of liberality, alienated good from Himself in order that the creature might be the true proprietor of it, and exhibit a goodness of which His own will was the sole cause. And this redounded ultimately to God's glory, for the worthiest and noblest creature must know Him best. Tertullian, then, distinctly and philosophically recognized a created will which was yet an original cause in nature. But St. Augustine, while, on the ground of Scripture, he assigned free will to man before the fall, never recognized philosophically an original source of good in the creature. As a philosopher he argued wholly upon the divine attribute of power, or the operation of a First Cause, to which he simply referred and subordinated all motion in the universe; and laid down in his dicta on this subject the foundation of scholastic necessitarianism.

“Thus philosophically predisposed, the mind of

St. Augustine took up the doctrine of original sin as handed down by the voice of the Church . . . and brought the mass of language which three centuries had used to a point. He explained the corruption of human nature to mean the loss of free will ; and this statement was the fundamental barrier which divided the later from the earlier scheme and *rationale* of original sin. The will, according to the earlier school, was not substantially affected by the fall. Its circumstances, its means and appliances, were altered, not itself ; and, endowed with spiritual aids in Paradise, deprived of them at the fall, re-endowed with them under the Gospel, it retained throughout these operations one and the self-same unchanged essential power, in that power of choice whereby it was in every successive state of higher or lower means able to use and avail itself of whatever means it had. But in Augustine's scheme the will itself was disabled at the fall, and not only certain impulses to it withdrawn, its power of choice was gone, and man was unable not only to rise above a defective goodness, but to avoid positive sin. He was henceforth, prior to the operation of grace, in a state of necessity on the side of evil, a slave to the devil and his own inordinate lusts.

“. . . Original sin was thus represented, in its nature and effects, by Augustine, as positive sin, 'and so *deserving* of, and in *fact*, in the case of heathen, *e.g.*, and unbaptized infants, actually receiving, eternal punishment.' In asserting the *desert* of punishment Augustine did no more than draw out the true scriptural and catholic doctrine ; but in asserting the *fact*

he exceeded the true doctrine, and did not take into account that Scripture and reason also declare that one man is not responsible for another man's sins ; and from this it follows that the posterity of Adam are *not*, as such, sinful, and therefore do *not* deserve such punishment. 'The doctrine of original sin ought not to be understated or curtailed because it leads to extreme conclusions on one side of the truth ; and Augustine, who is not deterred by such results from the full statement of it, is, so far, a more faithful interpreter of it than the earlier school. But those who draw out this doctrine to the full, and do not balance it by other truths, give it force at the expense of tenableness and justice ' " (pp. 116-125).

On the doctrine of Predestination Augustine "held the existence of an eternal divine decree, separating, antecedently to any difference of desert, one portion of the human race from another ; and ordaining one to everlasting life and the other to everlasting misery. It was not predestination to special means of grace, or a predestination to happiness and glory based on foreseen faith and obedience, which he maintained, but an absolute unconditional predestination to salvation or damnation. This doctrine occurs frequently in many of his treatises, wholly pervades some, and forms the basis of his whole teaching in the latter portion of his theological life" (p. 126). He "regarded this predestination as a perplexing mystery—a doctrine which disagreed with our natural ideas of God's justice, and which could only be defended by a reference to his inscrutable and sovereign will" (p. 134). He had to defend his doctrine, not only against

Pelagians, but against Catholic Christians¹; *e.g.*, the Church of Marseilles, as we learn through Prosper and Hilary, protested against the doctrine of the book "De Corruptione et Gratia," and were answered by the book "De Predestinatione Sanctorum."

"Scripture informs us of a mystery on the subject ; . . . it counterbalances those passages which convey the predestinarian doctrine by passages as plain the other way, but St. Augustine makes predestinarian statements and does not balance them by contrary ones. Rather he endeavours to explain away those contrary statements of Scripture." He erects those passages of Scripture which are suggestive of predestination into a system, explaining away the opposite ones, and converts the obscurity and inconsistency of Scripture language into that clearness and consistency by which a definite truth is stated. His was the error of those who follow without due consideration the strong first impression which the human mind entertains, that there must be some definite truth to be arrived at on the question under consideration, whatever it may be ; and who therefore imagine that they cannot be doing other than good service if they only add to what is defective enough to make it complete, or take away from what is ambiguous enough to make it decisive." . . . Whereas, "if Reve-

¹ Döllinger speaks of St. Augustine's views "on the necessity of sinning and the irresistible operations of the divine grace as not in perfect conformity with the tradition of the Church. ("Eccl. Hist.," Cox's transl., ii. 44.) "St. Augustine's theory respecting original sin and grace never became the doctrine of the Church." (Moehler on "Symbolism," ii. 64.)

lation as a whole does not speak explicitly, Revelation did not intend to do so; and to impose a definite truth upon it, when it designedly stops short of one, is as real an error of interpretation as to deny a truth which it expresses" (p. 147).

"The doctrine of absolute predestination implies the doctrine of efficacious or irresistible grace, for the end implies the means; and therefore, if eternal life is insured, the necessary qualifications for that life, which are holiness and virtue, must be insured also. But these can only be insured by such a divine influence as does not depend for its effect on the contingency of man's will; *i.e.*, by what divines call irresistible or efficacious grace—a grace which St. Augustine accordingly maintains."

Lastly, he maintains the doctrine of final perseverance, *viz.*, that to those whom God predestinates to eternal life He gives both efficacious grace and the gift to use it, so as to gain the holiness necessary for those that shall see God, and to persevere to the end of life without falling away from the grace given.

Canon Mozley points out the flaws which underlie the whole argument. Augustine and his school "commenced with an assumption, which no modern philosopher would allow, that the Divine Power was an absolutely unlimited thing. That the Divine Power is not liable to any *foreign* control is a principle which every one must admit who believes properly in a Deity; but that there is no intrinsic limit to it in the possibilities of things would not be admitted in the present state of philosophy, in which this whole subject is properly

understood to be out of the range of human reason." "Upon this abstract idea of the Divine Power rose up the Augustinian doctrine of predestination and grace, while upon the abstract idea of Free Will, as an unlimited faculty, rose up the Pelagian theory." "The question cannot be determined absolutely, one way or another; it lies between two great contradictory truths, neither of which can be set aside, nor made to give way to the other." "They are able to be held together because they are only incipient, and not final and complete truths," and this is, in fact, the mode in which this question is settled by the common sense of mankind, which agrees that we must hold together the doctrine of God's foreknowledge and predestination and man's free will, although we do not see *how* they agree (pp. 304-306).

The Augustinian theology excited little attention in the Eastern Church, which continued to hold the traditional belief. In the Western Church, though never authoritatively sanctioned, it had a deep and widespread influence, and is the theology of the Schoolmen, *e.g.*, of St. Thomas Aquinas, in the Middle Ages.

Calvin, with his logical and systematizing French mind, revived it, with certain exaggerations, at the Reformation. Most of the English refugees from the Marian persecution returned at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign imbued with the doctrines of Calvin; and many of the more eminent of them, being promoted to bishoprics and other dignities, spread these doctrines throughout the English Church; and the religious mind of England is thus to this day strongly tinged with the Augustinian theology.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE APPEAL TO ROME.

Apiarius, an African Priest, condemned by his Bishop, appeals to Rome—African Councils had forbidden Appeals beyond the Sea—Zosimus sends a Commission—The Spurious Canons of Nicæa—The Sixth Council of Carthage; its Canons of Discipline.

IN the years 418-19 an incident happened in Africa of considerable importance as illustrating the relations, in the primitive constitution of the Catholic Church, between the Roman See and the other branches of the Church.

Apiarius, a priest of Sicca, convicted of various faults, had been excommunicated by his bishop, Urban, one of the disciples of Augustine. Apiarius appealed to Zosimus, the bishop of Rome, against the decision of his bishop.

So Origen had appealed from the Bishop of Alexandria to the Bishop of Cæsarea, and Arius in turn had appealed to the Bishop of Nicomedia; and it was not very unusual in the early Church for an ecclesiastic who believed himself unjustly treated by his bishop to appeal to some influential bishop of another branch of the Church, and not unusual for him who was appealed to to interpose his good offices on behalf of his suppliant.

But the case of appeals from Africa to Rome was somewhat different from this. Africa was a province of the Western Empire ; and the great see of the Western Empire had a special attraction for the Churches of these Latin-speaking provinces. There was a growing disposition on the part of aggrieved African Christians to seek for the interference of the Roman bishop, and a disposition on the part of the occupants of the Roman see to interfere in the affairs of all the Churches of the Western Empire, and not even to limit their interference to the West. The African prelates, on the other hand, had steadily asserted and successfully maintained the entire independence of the African Church of all foreign interference. Cyprian and three African Councils of his time maintained the entire independence and autonomy of the African Church against Stephen, bishop of Rome, on the question of the rebaptism of heretics. Successive African Councils had forbidden appeals beyond the sea.

Now, again, the affair of Apiarius gave occasion to a solemn reassertion of the independence of the African Church, and placed the great name of Augustine beside that of Cyprian as the defender of the independence of individual Churches against the usurpations of the see of Rome.

Zosimus received the appeal of Apiarius, and appointed three legates to inquire into the case, and deal with it on the spot, viz., Faustinus, bishop of Potentia, in the March of Ancona, and two Roman priests, Philip and Asellus. Zosimus claimed that priests and deacons excommunicated by their bishop

had an appeal to the neighbouring bishops, and that bishops had an appeal to the Bishop of Rome. He founded this claim upon certain canons which he put forth as canons of the great General Council of Nicæa, to which the whole Church paid great deference ; but which were really canons of the local and not very important Council held at Sardica in the year 343-4.

The three legates declared the object of their mission at an assembly of bishops held at Carthage towards the end of the year 418. The African bishops objected that the claim was contrary to the customs of the African Church, and declared that no such canons as those quoted in support of it existed in their copies of the Canons of Nicæa ; and the assembly broke up. Five months later, on the 25th of May, 419, the usual annual council of the African Churches assembled at Carthage, in the basilica of Fausta, under the presidency of Aurelius, the bishop ; it is known as the Sixth Council of Carthage, and is famous in the history of the Church for its decisions on the whole subject of ecclesiastical discipline. The first question taken up by the council was that of the alleged canons of Nicæa. Alypius, of Thagaste, opened the subject by stating that the Greek copies of the canons of that council, which had been consulted, contained nothing of the kind. He suggested that the holy pope¹ Aurelius should send to Constantinople to examine the original documents, and

¹ All bishops were called popes in those days ; the pope, *par excellence*, was the Bishop of Alexandria. Elaborate titles of respect had long been applied to bishops. Lord and Holy Pope was the usual complimentary title of a bishop.

should communicate with the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch—the heads of the other great divisions of the Church. He was further of opinion that Boniface (who had succeeded Zosimus in the see of Rome) should also be invited to take similar steps to satisfy himself on this important question. The proposal was adopted; and the council proceeded to make, or renew, thirty-three canons dealing in a comprehensive way with the subject of ecclesiastical discipline. These canons of Carthage were subsequently adopted by all the Churches of the West; translated into Greek, they were also embodied among the canons of the Eastern Church; and they remain as a monument of the ancient constitution of the Church, and a testimony against the subsequent usurpations and pretensions of the Roman see. The particular case of Apiarius was happily disposed of. He asked pardon for his faults, and his bishop withdrew his excommunication; but he was removed from the Church of Sicca and sent to exercise his ministry elsewhere. In the letter of the council to Boniface occurs the sentence: “We hope that now you are seated on the throne of the Church of Rome we shall no more have to endure a worldly pride unworthy of the Church of Jesus Christ.”

The examination undertaken by the African prelates resulted in the discovery that the Church of Rome had put forward the canons of Sardica as part of those passed at Nicæa, the first of the long series of frauds and falsifications by which that see gradually encroached upon the rights of Churches, and revolutionized the primitive constitution of the Church.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ELECTION OF A SUCCESSOR.

Augustine desires repose—Heraclius—Proceedings at his Election to succeed Augustine.

AT the age of 72 (A.D. 426) Augustine began to desire help in the duties of the episcopal office, and he desired also to secure the nomination of a suitable successor when his episcopate should be terminated by death. His own choice fell upon one of his priests named Heraclius. Heraclius, like himself, had devoted his earlier years to the ordinary studies of a liberal education, and had followed the profession of an advocate. But having come to Hippo, at an age already mature, he had put himself entirely into Augustine's hands, as his instructor in divine learning and his guide in holy living. His father had left him considerable wealth. On his ordination as priest he had devoted half of it to the erection of a church, and wished to give the other half to Augustine to appropriate as he should think best. But Augustine acted with the prudence which was habitual with him in all such matters. He directed Heraclius to purchase an estate with the money, and then to give the estate to the Church. Augustine, in giving an account of the transaction to the people—it was his practice to inform them of all which he did in the administration of the

diocese—said, “I confess that I did not put entire confidence in his youth, and besides, knowing something of human nature, I feared lest his mother should be displeased, and should complain of what I did in depriving the son of what he had received from his father, and leaving him henceforth in poverty. I thought it right then to make him use his money in the purchase of this estate, in order that if any misfortune should happen to him, which I pray God may not be, I should be able to restore to him this estate, and save my reputation from suffering. But I bear this witness in his behalf that he has lived in poverty, and that he possesses nothing but charity.”

Heraclius occasionally preached in the absence of the bishop, but had never preached in his presence, because it was Augustine’s habit (as we have seen it was the custom of the African Churches) always to preach himself; but he now bade him preach in his presence, that he might be assured of his capacity for this part of the duty of a bishop.

We have already been present twice with the congregation of the faithful of Hippo in the Basilica of Peace; once when Augustine himself had the priesthood forced upon him, and again when the people tried to force the priesthood upon Pinianus. We are to be present once more, and the proceedings on this occasion have been so fully reported that we can follow them in their minute particulars.

On Sunday, 24th September, 426, a great crowd filled the nave of the basilica. In the tribune were not only Augustine, but two other bishops, Religianus and Martinianus; seven priests of the Church of

Hippo, Saturninus, Leporius, Barnabas, Fortunatius, Rusticus, Lazarus, and Heraclius ; with the deacons and sub-deacons. Augustine came forward to address the assembly. He began by saying that at divers seasons of life men hope, but arrived at the last season they hope no more. "I came to this city in the vigour of my youth," he continued ; "I was young, and now I am old. I know that after the death of bishops, ambitions and strife often trouble the Church. It is my duty, as much as lies in me, to spare this city from that which has more than once afflicted me elsewhere. As your charity knows, I went recently to Milevis, our brethren and the servants of God¹ there inviting me. The death of my brother and colleague, Severus, had caused the fear of a popular commotion. I went then to Milevis, and, the mercy of God having blessed my efforts, they received with a great peace the successor whom Severus had designated while yet living ; the people welcomed the nomination of the bishop from the moment that they were made acquainted with it. Nevertheless, some of the faithful were dissatisfied that Severus had limited himself to designating his successor to the clergy instead of designating him also to the people. What need I more say ? Thanks be to God, the anxiety of the people vanished and gave place to joy, and the choice of Severus was accepted. As for me, desiring to give no one room for complaint, I declare to you all my will, which I believe to be that of God ; I wish the priest Heraclius to be my successor."

¹ The clergy.

We are made conscious of the scrupulous formality with which the Acta—the report—of the proceedings were drawn up, when we find the notaries carefully recording the words in which the people signified their assent, and even counting the number of times their words were repeated, as evidence of the unanimity and heartiness of the popular vote. When Augustine had said these words, we are told the people cried, "Let us give thanks to God : let us give praises to Christ;" these words were repeated twenty-three times. "O Christ, hear us, prolong the life of Augustine;" the people repeated this prayer sixteen times. They said eight times, "You for our father, you for our bishop."

When these acclamations had ceased, Augustine continued : "There is no need that I should praise Heraclius ; I love his wisdom, I spare his modesty. It is enough that you know him ; when I ask for him for my successor, I know that you wish it also ; had I not known it, your acclamations to-day would have proved it. This, then, is what I wish, this is what I ask of God with ardent prayer in spite of the coldness of my old age. I exhort you, I warn you, I conjure you, to ask it together with me, in order that the peace of Christ may unite all our thoughts. May God confirm that which He has wrought in us. May He who has sent Heraclius to me guard him, keep him whole, safe, and without fault, in order that after he has been the joy of my life he may replace me after my death. You see that the notaries of the Church gather up what I say, and what you say ; my words and your acclamations do not fall to

the ground. To speak more plainly, these are ecclesiastical proceedings which we are transacting at this moment, and thus I wish to confirm my will as much as lies in my power.

Then the people cried thirty times, "Let us give thanks to God, let us give praise to Christ." They repeated thirteen times, "O Christ, hear us, prolong the life of Augustine." They repeated eight times, "You for our father, you for our bishop." They repeated twenty times, "It is right and just." The people repeated five times, "He has well deserved it, he is very worthy of it."

Augustine having again invited the people to pray to God for the confirmation of their will and his own, the people responded sixteen times, "We thank you for your choice." They said twelve times, "Let it be so;" and six times, "You for our father, Heraclius for our bishop."

Augustine then said that his own ordination as Valerius's coadjutor while Valerius was living had been contrary to a canon of the Council of Nicæa, which was then unknown to him, and that a similar course ought not to be taken in the case of Heraclius. The people answered in these words, thirteen times repeated, "Let us give thanks to God; let us give praise to Christ."¹

¹ M. Ponjoulat reminds us that in this curious procedure both the people in their acclamations and the notaries in their careful record of them were following traditional Roman usages. When the Senate elected Tacitus as the successor of Aurelian in its sitting of Sept. 25, A.D. 275, Tacitus remarked to the Conscript Fathers that he was already in the decline of life, and that a

The bishop then recalled to them that they ought, by a distinct promise, to leave him free five days in the week to devote to a work upon the Scriptures which the Fathers of the Councils of Numidia and Carthage had laid upon him. An act [minute] to this effect was read, and the acclamations of the people seemed to assure to Augustine the leisure which he desired. Augustine begged them hereafter to apply to Heraclius. They responded twenty-six times, "We thank you for your choice." Augustine assured the people that his counsels should not be wanting to Heraclius, and that the leisure which he should obtain should not be wasted. Before asking the signature of the act of election, the bishop appealed again, and for the last time, for the decision

younger chief would be more capable of leading the soldiers. His excuses were lost in the acclamations of the illustrious assembly; and their exclamations, and the number of times they were repeated, were recorded by the notaries in the public acts. Flavius Vopiscus records: "The Senate responded by their acclamations:—Trajan also was old when he ascended the throne (ten times). Hadrian came to it when old (ten times). Antoninus was no longer young when he obtained it (ten times). Have you not read, "I recognise the white hair and the white beard of the King of the Romans"? :—

. . . "Nosco crines incanaque menta
Regis Romani."—"Æneid," book vi. (ten times).

Who knows better how to reign than an old man (ten times). We do not make you a soldier, but an emperor (twenty times). You will order the soldiers to fight (thirty times). Severus said it was the head and not the feet which commanded (thirty times). It is your soul and not your body that we care for (twenty times). Augustus Tacitus, the gods preserve you !

of the people, and acclamations many times repeated resounded through the Basilica of Peace. Then Augustine invited the people to join with great fervour in the holy sacrifice about to begin, and asked them to pray for the Church of Hippo, for himself, and for the priest Heraclius.

The scene, interesting in itself, is also valuable as an illustration of the usual mode of election of a bishop in the fifth century, and of the modifications introduced occasionally by a wise bishop, with a view to prevent the ambitions and jealousies among the clergy and the party spirit among the people, to which the usual mode of election was liable.

Heraclius appears no more in the history. Doubtless he relieved Augustine of much of the routine work of his office; but we find that, as was very natural, the people still sought Augustine's counsel and his judgment, and encroached very much upon the literary leisure which he had sought to secure.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE VANDAL INVASION.

Count Boniface—His Antecedents and Character ; Fidelity ; Promotion—Aetius—His Jealousy of Boniface—Intrigue against Him—Revolt of Boniface—Invites the Invasion of the Vandals—Augustine's Letter to Him—Reconciliation of Boniface with the Empress — The Vandals pursue their Conquest—Siege of Hippo.

IN the agony of the Western Empire two names stand out conspicuously as the last bulwarks of the Roman greatness, Aetius and Boniface, "the last of the Romans." Boniface had commanded the garrison of Marseilles in 413, when it was besieged by Adolphus, the brother and successor of Alaric ; he had saved the city from the Goths, wounding their king in battle with his own hand. Afterwards in Africa, in command of a handful of troops, he waged such a vigilant and successful warfare against the independent nomad tribes who were accustomed to harass the settled provinces with frequent incursions, that he compelled them to keep the peace. The Tribune Boniface was also a Catholic Christian of exemplary piety.

In 417, Boniface was promoted to the office of Count of Africa. In that year in reply to some inquiries as to the relations of the civil authority to the Donatist party, Augustine wrote a long letter to the

count, in which he gave a summary of the history of the party, and justified the execution of the Imperial laws against them. In the following year, 418, we have another letter of Augustine to the count, "On the duties of men of war." It is an essay on the proposition that it is lawful for Christians to fight in the interests of peace and for the security of their country. Some years after the count, suffering under the loss of his wife, expressed in an interview with Augustine, Alypius also being present, his desire to abandon the world and retire to a monastery. The two bishops dissuaded him ; they represented that he might serve God and the Church more usefully in his present capacity ; that the Church of Africa had need not only of saintly ascetics to call down blessings from heaven by their prayers, but also of generals and statesmen who would defend her against the ravages of the barbarians and the Circumcellions. They pointed out that his position as Count of Africa did not prevent him from living the life of continency and asceticism which he desired. The Empress Pulcheria, at that moment ruling the East wisely and vigorously, was a Church virgin, and had turned the palace at Constantinople into a religious house. Augustine himself was living the life of an ascetic while governing the see of Hippo. The count had adopted Augustine's counsels.

The Emperor Honorius, after his unfortunate and inglorious reign of eight-and-twenty years, died on the 27th of August, A.D. 422. A few months before his death, his sister Placidia and her children had been driven from Ravenna by a palace intrigue and had retired to the court of Constantinople. This absence

of the rightful successor to the empire left an opportunity to an usurper, which was seized by John, one of the chief officials of the Government. In this crisis Boniface, the count of Africa, remained faithful to Placidia and her son. He defeated the troops sent by John to seize upon the reins of authority in Africa, he sent supplies of money to the empress at Constantinople, and withheld the usual supplies of corn from Rome. An army marched from Constantinople upon Ravenna, and at the same time a conspiracy was organized against the usurper in his own court; the gates of Ravenna were thrown open to the Eastern troops, and John met the fate which he had deserved. Boniface was called to court, and the gratitude of the empress was shown in his elevation to the office of Count of the Domestics, the highest office in the Empire, while he still retained his important command in Africa.

Soon afterwards, Augustine was surprised and grieved to learn that Boniface had married a second wife, who moreover was an Arian, and, on the birth of a daughter, he allowed her to be baptized by the Arians.

The elevation of Boniface excited the jealousy of Aetius. Aetius, the son of Gaudentius, Master of the Cavalry, had been brought up at the Imperial court. He had been given as a hostage to Alaric; and afterwards had resided in the same capacity in the camp of Attila, whose friendship he had gained, and had entered into relations with the Huns which might on occasion serve his own ambition. On the death of Honorius he thought that such an

occasion had arrived, and invited an army of 60,000 Huns to strengthen the forces of the usurper John. On the death of John, Aetius hastened to reconcile himself with Placidia ; the Huns were satisfied with money and promises and dismissed, and Aetius restored to favour.

And now we come to the blackest treachery, and the most unhappy in its results, which even the history of the Empire contains. Aetius aspired to the highest honours of the State, which his subsequent history shows that he had the abilities to fill worthily. Two such men, united, might have saved the Empire. But Aetius was jealous of the talents of Boniface, and of the position which his fidelity had given him in the Imperial favour, and laid a plot for his ruin. His position at the court of Ravenna gave him an advantage over Boniface, who was in his distant government at Carthage. He persuaded Placidia to believe that the Count of Africa was intending to make himself independent, and counselled his recall to court. At the same time he wrote as a friend to Boniface to warn him that the Empress was afraid of his greatness, and that his recall to court was only the prelude to his death. Boniface believed his friend ; was enraged at the ingratitude of the Empress ; resolved to resist the fate with which he was threatened, fell into the snare which Aetius had prepared for him, and broke out into open rebellion. He was declared an enemy to the State, and the forces of the Western Empire were mustered against the rebel count.

Boniface, weighing his own resources against those at the disposal of the empress, knew himself unable

to maintain the unequal war, and took the resolution to invite barbarian allies to his aid. The Vandals under Gonderic had lately proved their valour in Spain. His second wife, Pelagia, was the niece of their king. To him Boniface sent an embassy, asking his alliance and offering an advantageous and perpetual settlement in Africa as the price of their assistance. The able and fierce Genseric, who at this crisis succeeded his half-brother Gonderic as king of the Vandals, accepted the invitation. Ships, both of Spain and Africa, were assembled at Gibraltar, and the Vandal armies to the number of 50,000 were transferred to the African side of the narrow strait. The ambition of Genseric was without bounds and without scruples ; to the skill of a barbarian warrior he added the dark policy of an ambitious king ; he proposed to himself to play a grander part in Africa than that of helping to secure it to the rebellious count, and remaining satisfied with a province as his pay. The western parts of Mauritania, which border on the great desert and the Atlantic ocean, were filled with fierce and intractable tribes, whose savage tempers had been exasperated rather than restrained by their dread of the Roman arms. Genseric established relations with them, and engaged them as allies in his designs.

Meantime communications had passed between Ravenna and Carthage. The friends of Boniface had requested that some one might be sent to confer with him on the part of the empress. Darius, an officer of high distinction, was named for the important embassy. In the first interview at Carthage the intrigue

of Aetius was at once discovered. Impunity was promised on the part of Placidia, and Boniface returned to his allegiance; and both proceeded to take steps to restore the tranquillity of the province. But though the Roman troops and the inhabitants of the provinces readily returned with their general to their allegiance, the King of the Vandals refused all terms of accommodation, and proceeded to effect the conquest of Africa for himself. The barbarian tribes flocked to his standards; and the swarthy heroes of the Atlas and the wild riders of the desert fought side by side with the fair blue-eyed Northmen, who in the space of twenty years had fought their way across a continent from the Elbe to Seville and Carthagera, and now resolved to win themselves a kingdom under the suns of Africa. The Donatists scattered throughout the provinces, now as always, sided with the enemy of the Empire. The Vandals, Arians in religion, seemed to them as natural allies in their common opposition to the orthodox Church; and the conquests of the Vandals were facilitated by the active zeal or the secret favour of a domestic faction.¹

A battle took place in which the troops of Boniface and his hasty levies were defeated by the Vandals, with considerable loss. Boniface retired into Hippo, which with Cirta and Carthage alone remained to the Empire, and the open country was abandoned to the ravages of the barbarians.

The attitude of Augustine during these events is on

¹ Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," chap. xxxiii.

record. In a letter to Boniface he writes :—"You say that you have had good reasons for acting as you have done. I am not a judge of them, because I am not able to hear both sides ; but whatever may have been your reasons, which there is no need to consider and weigh at this moment, can you deny before God that you would not have come to this necessity, if you had not loved the good things of this world, which you ought to have despised and reckoned as nothing worth, remaining faithful to your pious intention of serving God ? . . .

"What shall I say of Africa, devastated by the barbarians even of Africa itself, and without any one to hinder them ? Under the pressure of your personal anxieties you do nothing to avert these misfortunes. When Boniface was but a tribune, he conquered and restrained all these nations with a handful of allies. Who would have believed that when Boniface was Count of the Palace and of Africa, with a large army and great power, the barbarians would have invaded us with such audacity, would have ravaged everywhere, pillaged everything, and changed so many places, lately so populous, into deserts. It used to be said that from the day that you were endued with the authority of Count, the barbarians would be not only conquered, but made tributaries to the Roman power. You see what has now become of men's hopes ; I shall speak very briefly of it ; your own thoughts will be more full and forcible than words of mine. But perhaps you will reply that I ought to attribute these evils to those who have injured you, and who have repaid with unjust harshness your courageous

services. These are things of which I have no knowledge, and cannot judge. Examine and judge yourself; not to ascertain if you are in the right before men, but if you are in the right before God." He puts before him the example of Christ, who conferred on men so many good things, and received from them so many evil things. They who desire to belong to His Divine kingdom love their enemies, do good to those who hate them, and pray for those who persecute them. .

If the Count has received benefits from the Empire—benefits earthly and transitory as the Empire itself—he ought not to return evil for good; if he has received injuries from it, it is not evils which he ought to return. Augustine does not trouble himself to inquire which it really is which Boniface has received; he is speaking to a Christian, and a Christian returns neither evil for good, nor evil for evil.

The Count will say, perhaps, "But what am I to do in the situation in which I am?" If it is of the preservation, and even the augmentation of his wealth and power that Boniface is thinking, Augustine does not know what to answer; what certain counsel is it possible to give in matters so uncertain? But if the Count asks to be enlightened as concerns God, the bishop will reply that we ought not to love, but to despise the things of this world; and that it profiteth a man nothing to gain the whole world and lose his own soul. Detachment from the world, strife against its lusts, penitence for past misdeeds, this is the counsel which Augustine will give him; it concerns

his strength of will to follow the advice. The Count will ask again how he can escape from the engagements by which he is bound? The bishop tells him that God will deliver him in the war against his invisible enemies, as He has so often delivered him from his external foes. The good things of life, the prosperity of this world, are given indifferently to the good and the evil, but the safety of the soul, the glory and peace of eternity, are given only to the good. Augustine recommends to the Count the love and the pursuit of those imperishable goods, and invites him to alms, prayer, and fasting; and, if the interests of the public good permitted it, he would counsel him to renounce arms, and retire into the pious retreats where the soldiers of Christ wage war against the princes, the powers, and the spirits of evil.

There is something magnanimous in the return of Boniface to his allegiance, which corresponds with our ideas of his character, and which may not have been uninfluenced by the severe fidelity of Augustine's counsels. We may feel sure that when the Count fell back upon Hippo, and took refuge with a handful of his broken troops within its walls, his repentance had opened the heart of the aged bishop to him, and that warm heart and eloquent tongue would know how to soothe the wounded conscience, and cheer the oppressed spirit of the great and erring statesman. It was a terrible penance he had to endure. The pride of his life had been that he had given Africa rest from the barbarians, he had promoted her prosperity, he had given her people a just administration, he had made Africa contribute, at a critical moment,

to the welfare of the Empire. His penance was, to be shut up for months in Hippo while the barbarians, who had invaded Africa on his invitation, ravaged the provinces, committing all the atrocities in which barbarians indulge among a wealthy, luxurious population. And though Augustine had no share in causing these misfortunes, his sensitive spirit would feel them deeply. "This devastation," says Possidonius, who was an eye-witness of it, "embittered the later days of Augustine's life. He saw the towns ruined, the country houses destroyed, the inhabitants killed or fugitives, the churches destitute of priests, the virgins and religious dispersed. Some had succumbed to torments, others had perished by the sword, others again were carried into captivity and served hard and brutal masters." It was, above all, against the churches and the monasteries that they exercised their cruelty. They employed the most cruel tortures to compel the priests to give up the gold and silver of the churches. They would never believe that they had given up everything, and the more the unhappy men gave the more they were tormented, in the hope of extracting still more from them. A great number of bishops and persons of the highest distinction were reduced to slavery, compelled to carry loads like beasts of burden, and urged onward with the point of spear and sword. Mansuetus, bishop of Utica, was burnt alive. Papinianus, bishop of Vita, had his body covered with plates of red-hot iron.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DEATH OF AUGUSTINE.

Augustine's Letter on the Duty of Bishops during Invasion—
His Occupations during the Siege—Sickness—Death—His
Influence as a Theologian — Conclusion of History of
Africa.

AT the beginning of the calamities related in the previous chapter, some bishops of Africa had consulted Augustine as to their duty in such a crisis. Quodvultdeus, one of them, wrote to ask if he ought to let his people flee, and withdraw himself to avoid the peril. Augustine answered that he ought not to deter his people from fleeing, but that the bishops ought not to abandon their churches, nor to break the ties which bound them to their ministry; that they could do nothing therefore but give themselves up with entire confidence to the will of God, and wait for His help.

This answer being made public, a bishop, named Honoratus, demurred to it, recalling that Jesus Christ had commanded His disciples to flee from danger, and had Himself set an example of it. Augustine answered him at length in a remarkable letter. Honoratus had quoted the text—"When they persecute you in one city, flee into another." "Who will believe," he asks, "that the Saviour wished in these

words to ordain that the flocks which He has redeemed with His blood should be deprived of the ministry without which they cannot live? Was this what He did when an infant carried by his parents, He fled into Egypt? He had not yet assembled churches which He might fear to abandon. If some bishop is persecuted, he is at liberty to flee from city to city, because his church will not therefore be deprived of a pastor. If the entire population is able to flee to fortified places, the bishop ought to go with them. But there are always some of the faithful who cannot flee, and it is with them that the bishop ought to remain, because they have most need of his spiritual help. He ought to live with them, and suffer with them, whatever it shall please the Father of the family to send. . . . Those suffer for the others, who, being able to flee, have chosen rather to remain, and not to abandon their brothers in their misfortunes. This is the love which the Apostle St. John teaches when he says, 'Christ gave His life for us, and we ought also to give our lives for the brethren.' Those who are taken when they fled, or when they were detained unwillingly, these die for themselves, not for their brethren; but they who, when their brothers had need of them in order to their salvation, would not abandon them, they without doubt give their lives for their brethren. No one could exact that the ministers of the Lord should remain in places where their ministry can no longer be exercised because their flock is destroyed or dispersed. But if the flock remain, and their ministers take to flight, and deprive them of their ministrations, will

not their flight be like that of hirelings who have no care for the flock? Let us be more afraid to see the living stones of the Church perish by our absence than to see the stones and wood of the material buildings burnt in our presence. Let us fear lest the members of Christ perish for want of spiritual nourishment, rather than that the members of our own body should perish by the violence of the enemy."

Amidst these wars and miseries, even when his city was actually besieged by the Vandals, the labours of Augustine did not pause. A troop of Arian Goths in the Imperial service which formed part of the garrison of Hippo, had an Arian bishop to minister to them ; and with this bishop, Maximin, he engaged in a public discussion, which he followed up with a written refutation of his arguments. Prosper, of Aquitaine, and the bishops of Gaul were hard pressed by the Pelagians, who abounded in that province and in Britain, and who claimed for their views the support of tradition and that of the Fathers of the Church ; they invoked the aid of the powerful pen and the great authority of Augustine, and he at once responded to the call by writing the two books, "On the Predestination of the Saints," and "On the Gift of Perseverance." He occupied himself also in collecting and arranging his letters.

Three months after the commencement of the siege Augustine, who was now seventy-six years of age, and had long been in failing health, fell sick. Several bishops who had retreated with the remnant of their flocks into this last bulwark of Africa. lived with Augustine.

Possidonius, his biographer, was one of them. He gives us a glimpse of the society at Augustine's episcopal house during these sad times. "The misfortunes which we witnessed made the subject of our usual conversations. We considered the terrible judgments which the Divine justice was accomplishing before our eyes, and we said, 'Thou art just and good, and Thy judgments are true.' We mingled our griefs, our groans, and our tears, and we made of them a sacrifice to the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, beseeching Him to deliver us from the evils we endured and from those we feared.

"I remember one day, as we conversed with Augustine at table on the miseries of the time, he said to us : 'What I ask of God in these painful times is that He would please to deliver this city from the enemies who besiege it ; or, if He has otherwise ordained it, that He will give His servants strength to endure all the evils which He shall permit to happen to them ; or at least that He will withdraw me from this world, and be pleased to call me to Himself.' We profited by this instruction, and we joined our prayers to his, we and those of our company, and also the others who were then in the city.

"In the third month of the siege he was attacked with fever, which obliged him to keep his bed, from which he never rose again. We saw by that that God had not rejected the prayer of his servant, even as on other occasions He had accepted the prayers and tears he had offered asking some favour, whether for himself or for others."

Our view of the saint and of his times would be

incomplete if we did not extract another sentence from the same narrator of his last hours, in which he tells us that "while the saint on his death-bed was already in his mortal agony, a man whose son was sick brought him and begged the dying bishop to lay his hands upon him. He answered that if he had the power thus to heal the sick, he should exercise it first upon himself. But the man told him that he had had a dream in which a voice had uttered these words : ' Go, seek the bishop Augustine, ask him to lay hands on your son and he shall be healed.' Augustine then did as the man asked him ; he laid his hands on the sick young man and he was healed instantly. God willed, by this miracle which he caused to be done by the saint at the end of his life, to put the seal, as it were, on the holiness of his life, as well as on his pious and learned writings. I know, also, that when Augustine was only a priest, and after he became a bishop, people came to ask him to pray for the possessed, and that, offering to God his prayers and tears, he obtained their deliverance."

His biographer tells us that Augustine had often said to him that even the very best of Christians ought not to leave this world without worthy and sufficient penitence ; and so he acted when his own time came. As he felt death approaching, he begged his friends and the bishops who were living in his house not to enter his chamber except at the same time with his physician or the attendants who waited on him, that he might be as little interrupted as possible. He had the " Penitential Psalms " written out large and affixed to the wall of his chamber, within

his sight. And thus, in solitude and prayer, he passed the last six days of his life.

He died in the night of the 28th or 29th of August, 430, at the age of seventy-six, forty of which he had lived as priest and bishop at Hippo. He had hardly closed his eyes when a letter from Theodosius, the Emperor of the East, arrived, inviting his attendance at the General Council of Ephesus.

Thus, then, we have endeavoured to place before our readers one of the great saints of the Church, with his vast genius, his emotional temperament, his early failings and his ascetic virtues ; and round this central figure we have endeavoured to sketch a history of that great African branch of the Church of Christ, which alone of all the great branches of the early Church has utterly decayed and perished.

We need only add here, to the appreciations of Augustine's personal character and literary genius which we have made from time to time as the occasion arose, that no human mind since that of St. Paul has so widely, deeply, permanently influenced the Church of Christ. The theology of the Western Church throughout the Middle Ages was deeply affected by his writings ; the Reformers of the sixteenth century went back to them for their dogmatic theology ; and we, perhaps, in the perplexities of our age, might do well to go back to the philosophical and doctrinal writings of the great thinker of the Western Church.

Another sentence will suffice to conclude the political history which we have left unfinished. For

eleven months after Augustine's death the Vandals still persevered in their siege of Hippo ; but Count Boniface, receiving succours by the sea, was able to prolong his resistance and make good the city against them. At length they raised the siege, and shortly after, troops arriving from Rome and from Constantinople, the Count again took the field, and having again been defeated in a great battle (A.D. 431), he placed the remnant of his troops on board the transports which brought them, allowed the inhabitants of Hippo to occupy the places of the slain, and so abandoned the scene of his glories, his errors, and his misfortunes. The Vandals set fire to the deserted city and left the ruins of Hippo as the monument to its great bishop. Eight years afterwards, 439, Carthage fell, and the Vandal conquest of Africa was complete. Another sixteen years and Genseric had taken and sacked Rome, 455, and brought back its spoils to enrich his African dominion. Throughout the hundred years of the Vandal dominion in Africa the orthodox Christians endured a persecution as terrible as that of Decius or Diocletian. The conquest of the province by Belisarius, A.D. 535, gave it a gleam of hope of the return of civilization and religion. The conquest of the Saracens in A.D. 698 closed the ancient history of the provinces of Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania, and commenced the modern story of Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco.

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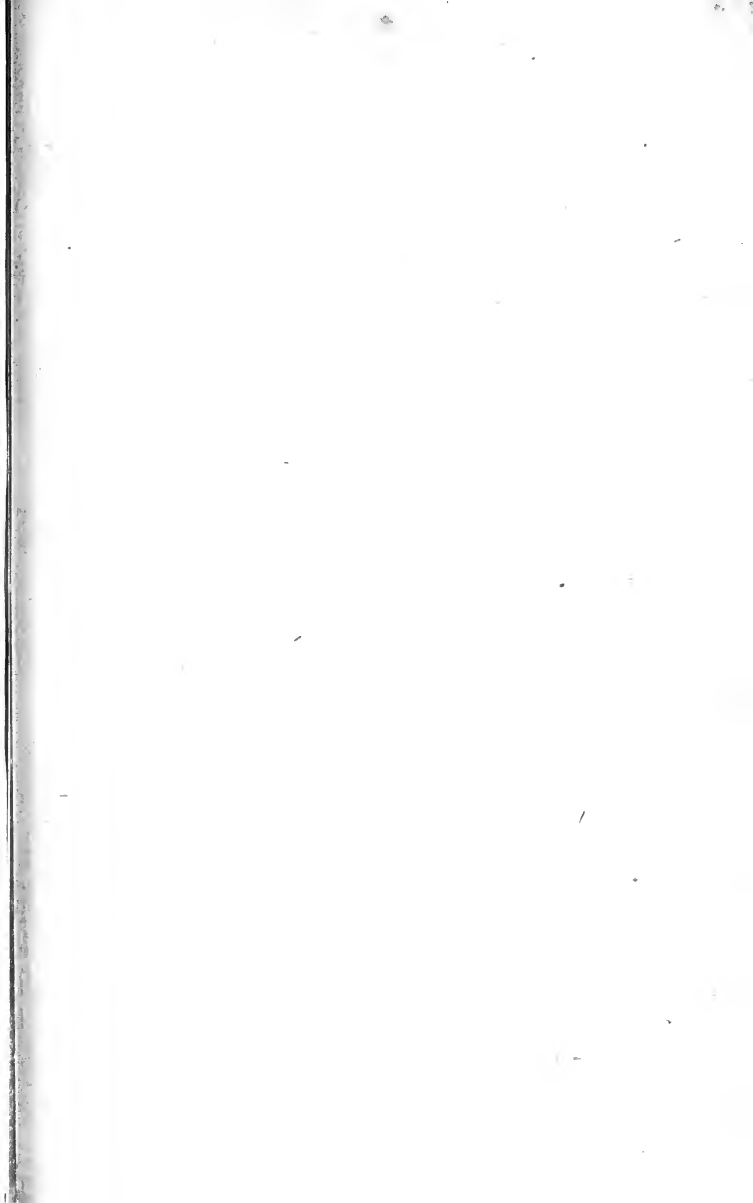
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